SHADOWS OF RAVENSWORTH

Tales of My Neighborhood

Neil Damgaard

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ISBN-13: 9798859957231
ISBN-10: 1477123456

Cover design by: Art Painter; image by NCD on Bing! Create
Library of Congress Control Number: 2018675309
Printed in the United States of America

I dedicate this little remembrance to my friends from Annandale days, Jeff Kemp, Basil Finnegan, Jocelyn and Roz Moore, Linda Eardley Hollis, Linda Rasmussen Torres, Jim Melancon, the Sexton family and Rick LeCompte.

AHS teachers that were special to me: Peggy Jarman, Paul Douglas, Barbara Aspinall, Patricia Opp and Paul Schwartz.

Grateful apprecation to Linda Eardley Hollis who provided editorial suggestions and has been my Columbia Pines friend for many years.

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SHADOWS OF RAVENSWORTH

Neil C. Damgaard

Prologue

December 1971

I carefully climbed up the side of the scaffolding, with one cinder block in one hand and my other hand grasping tightly the cold pipes of the framework. It was 8 am and I was cold. As I stood up, the mason—crabby in the early morning December frost—said, "put the block here, right in front of me. Not six inches away or I'll make you take the block back down and hoist it up again."

Jim Melancon and I were Virginia Tech students who were home in Annandale on December vacation. We had been good friends before that at Annandale High School and now we both wanted to get temporary laboring jobs because they paid better than returning to the theater at which we had both worked while in high school. So, we found hiring by the Mount Vernon Masonry company which was constructing a new public library building in Springfield. We toted brick (with brick tongs) and cinder block (by hand, one at a time) for the union masons who were laying them into place up on the scaffolding. It was the hardest physical labor I ever did, and I lasted a week. Jim lasted a little longer, as I remember. We were paid $3 an hour. Only later did I learn that we had been working almost in the back yard of what was once the Ravensworth mansion.

August 1, 1926

Outside it was still, the air was dank and hot although it was night time and of course, totally dark but for

the countless stars that shone. And starlight was the only light--no moon over the Fairfax fields and glens. As had been the case for over one hundred and fifty years, a subtle but sweet, lingering tobacco aroma was ever present. This was why the plantation had lasted so long, even through the Civil War when both the Federal and Confederate governments mandated that no military units should sack the historic place, the Ravensworth mansion.

Dr. Lee was asleep and the farm was quiet. The manor house had been built in 1796, the last of the three mansions for the plantation and the largest. It was said to have been intended as a "retreat from the social distractions of Fredericksburg." George Washington was still alive and although 66 years old and in the last two years of his life, he still got around. He had come over the 14 miles from Mount Vernon to Ravensworth a couple of times, visiting what would come to be known as "Annandale" itself, many times. Ravensworth was an extremely handsome home with wide, pillared two-story verandas extending the length of the house, and its landscaping was done with great care. The furnishings were priceless heirlooms of the Lees, Custises, Parkes, Fitzhughs, and Bollings. The walls were hung with probably the finest private collection of early American portraits in existence.

As Dr. Lee slept, a faint whiff of a burning smell passed through the open windows. It did not awaken him at first. A tiny fire had begun outside a grate in a parlor in the west wing, or at least that would be the later speculation. The small combustion quickly spread to the draperies and the upholstered furniture. In fifteen minutes the whole interior of the west wing was engulfed and smoke began slowly to invade all the open windows. Dr Lee woke with a start, sprang out of bed and wrestled on a thin gown. He roused his family and they all made for the stair case of the main hall and exited through the front doors. No one was outside and they stood, helpless and astonished and

just watched as the fire blasted on to, and quickly through the main west boundary wall. In 25 minutes, the main mansion was involved. There was as yet no telephone on the premises and so there was no modern way to summon fire assistance.

The Lees stood, and watched and the 1796 main house almost exploded in flames. Soon a few neighboring friends made their way up the drive and they all watched together, the women with more emotion, the men stoic and Dr. Lee just saddened with a disoriented, surreal feeling. With this fire, the Fitzhugh, Custis and Lee family presence in Fairfax County really saw its funereal ending. Dr. George Bolling Lee, Robert E. Lee's grandson, would immediately build a smaller farmhouse and a stable on the tract and live there another 20 years until his death in 1948. But by then Annandale was pregnant with expansion and everywhere new neighborhoods were being excavated, asphalted and laid right over and across all the old farmlands. New generations were being born into the County--government, industry, the military-industrial-complex and many educational assets were planted.

By 1962 a giant new, modernistic airport would be constructed, engulfing much of the Fitzhugh acreage.[1] By the mid 1960s my parents were calling Annandale "Gasoline Alley" because of so many gas stations. And "hamburger joints" (as my dad called them) also sprung up all over the place.

And on that cold December morning in 1971, as Jim and I hauled brick and block, we worked the land that was once upon a time the original Ravensworth Plantation Mansion grounds. Along with Ossian Hall and Oak Hill the three comprised the Fitzhugh residences of the original Ravensworth plantation. "Ravensworth" was a monster land grant. In the late 1600s the

plantation which was the background for these homes--a tract granted to William Fitzhugh, originally from Bedford, England. He had settled in Westmoreland County and in 1685 purchased from John Matthews nearly 22,000 acres in what was to become Fairfax County. "Ravensworth" derives from Ravens wood" (*Kraka* in Old Viking) what was in the midlands of England.

2023

Now, all these years later, I am in a reflective mood. I think about my town and the greater Fairfax County in which I was raised. I think of growing up in the Washington D.C. area with all its history, powerful national events, sports teams, transient population so driven by military matters when I was growing up. I think about my friends, some with whom I am still close. I think of my half-sister Deborah, whom I only learned about and met in 2018 and who grew up in "the District" just across the river from me. She and I have reminiced often about growing up in and near to the nation's capitol.

I think of 1815, 1861, 1932, 1941 and 1963. I think of all the things that from my perspective sprang forth from the "shadows of Ravensworth."

If I had been placed to live in the years of the Fitzhugh family and rode a horse or a wagon between the plantation homes, would I have liked the people that I knew? My Annandale friends of a century and more later, were very different. We were not agrarian at all. We were less interested in literature and more interested in music and film. We were ambitious and most of my classmates attended colleges after high school and graduate schools after that. That did not make us better or more noble but certainly more mobile. Those few who did not attend college found good trades

or excelled in the military. I am thinking of males but ours was a time, post-World War II, when women found new opportunities, empowerment and professional avenues other than only one or two options. From my perspective none of us had much to whine or complain about.

We were all equipped with electricity and automobiles and transistor radios, sports and lots of leisure time and countless new appliances and boundaried by fewer social rules and almost no religious strictures. If our parents felt family-anchored loyalties to certain spiritual traditions, we did not and all but a few of us abandoned or changed them. We enjoyed readily available emergency health care if we needed it. We took vacations. We flew on airliners. We learned the news immediately after a thing happened. We had large and well-staffed schools. Our dads wore uniforms that said, “we dare you, mess with us.” Our parents had grown up during the Depression, fought a world war, endured deprivations, and if they quietly bore their post-traumatic stresses they complained little but perhaps just those stresses leach into our lives too.

For the 1960s Annandale generation divorce became commonplace, even often expected. Many explored sex without commitment. Some imagined “a woman’s right to choose to terminate the fetus” (facilitating sex without consequence--and I had no problem with this ethic before 1972-73), codifying it into the law of the land and finally canonizing it. Abortion became a "right" in 1973 and then it became not-a right with a later Supreme Court. We discovered drugs and narcotics and all kinds of new addictive behaviors previously unknown. We empowered pornography to become a multi-billion dollar industry. We decided that basic gender can be decided later and in fact, changed, or even deleted altogether and that any objections are by definition now hate-based. The Fitzhughs and Custises and none of their neighbors including slaves or the native Americans who lived on these lands before, would understand us. They

understood the topography, the weather patterns, the growing seasons and their own history but they would not have grasped the social changes.

Annandale did not have wide gulfs between classes of people and certainly no one class was allowed to institutionally lord it over another class. There were prejudices and “isms”-a-plenty but equity had been born at least, and we were expected to respect at least a pretense for it. If I were time-transported back to the 1850s, say, would I have been comfortable with slavery as I rode by Oak Hill and saw the slave dwellings? Or would I have been impassioned by “states’ rights?” when most Fairfax citizens signed on to secession? Or for that matter, transporting back another ninety years before Fort Sumter, would I have felt loyal to King George III and the Crown of England and become a Tory? It was another time with other urgencies and different applications of biblical ethics.

All that said however, I love the times in which I grew up. I do not wish I was born in 1660 or 1760 or 1860. I do not long for travelling by horse. I do not relish hearing harpsichord music. I do not crave summers with no air conditioning. I am quite content to recall the friends and times I was given. I love history! But I also love to inventory the blessings I have enjoyed in my story.

INTRODUCTION

I didn't grow up in California, Seattle, Iowa, Florida, Montana, Texas or New England. I grew up in Northern Virginia. I was raised in Annandale, among the "shadows" of what was once the huge colonial land-purchased plantation: *Ravensworth*. In 1685 some 22,000 acres of northern Virginia land were purchased by Englishman Colonel William H. Fitzhugh. That giant tract, which would grow over its next century to 24,000 acres--was found to include wild buffalo, bear, bobcats, wolf-packs and transient Native-Americans was later named "Ravensworth." I knew none of this growing up in the lands of that old plantation—it was just "Annandale" which I knew only vaguely to have been named after some place in Scotland. Somewhere along the line, someone said there was an Annandale in New Jersey too. Whatever.

The town in which my friends and I grew up was quaint with a temperate if humid climate and never far from the seat of such dramas as the Nation's Capitol hosted. We knew about Captain John Smith's early map of the area. We knew about the British burning of the White House. We knew about Harper's Ferry and about Ford's Theater and Arlington House and the National Cemetery and about FDR. We knew what the Smithsonian Institute was. We heard about Andrews Air Force base all the time, even visited a few times. We shivered and wept with Jacqueline

and Caroline and "John-John" as we viewed JFK's casket slowly meander to its resting place at the National Cemetery. We knew of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial. We loved the Washington Senators and Redskins and had little love for any of the Baltimore Orioles or Colts, or the New York Yankees or the Philadelphia 76ers.

In the 1960s my town was in a time of a dynamic transition. It felt very different than it feels now when I am there for a visit. Now, there is little-to-nothing quiet or relaxed about it. Then, you could still tell when it was Sunday. Then, there was "rush hour," Monday through Friday with only the occasional and predictable holidays. Then, most everyone I knew was middle-class. Then, there were few electronics. Then, most families had one automobile and most garages--if you had one--were single-car or a "carport.". Then, you watched Louie Allen on channel 7 for the weather at 5:30 pm. Then, there were Saturday morning cartoons as we dove into bowls of Sugar Pops. Then, there were Republicans (if we had any idea what they were other than "Ike") and there were Democrats (and we knew that JFK and LBJ were these.) Then, the new Beltway was just four lanes--two in each direction. We knew where Falls Church was but Reston was brand new. We knew where Alexandria was but we never heard of Crystal City. We were intimately familiar with everything on Columbia Pike but the Toll Road was barren and mysterious and "out there."

From George Washington's days until the present day—his Mount Vernon was a dozen miles or so from Annandale—the town echoed many important happenings in our national story. My friends and I had little interest and did not often speak of these. We were just living life. But as I remember those fifteen years or so from 1955 until 1970, I have mostly fond recollections. I want to tell some of that story, from a terribly personal point of view. I will mention many friends and mostly use real names. My friends could tell their own interpretations of the times, each other and how most were led off to other parts of the country and world. But

our town has left a distinctly American imprint upon us.

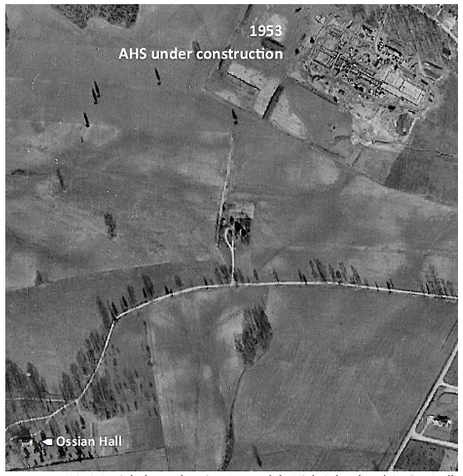
MODERN TALES OF MY NEIGHBORHOOD

In this little book, I meander between various stories about growing up in my neighborhood and the historical “air” that we all breathed there whether we knew what we were breathing or not.

For starters, I was never a Methodist and for quite a few years had no idea what one was. But there was a small and old Methodist church perhaps two hundred yards from my house; one of the very few standing public buildings today virtually unchanged from my childhood. It has an old cemetery on its grounds. I wandered through that cemetery from time to time, perusing the headstones, wondering what were the stories of the people. How could you not? From a young age I noticed that two of the headstones had become overgrown by tall trees! And I remember thinking as a kid, "that's going to happen to all of us eventually" (cremation as a trendy thing was decades in the future). It seems that the oldest stone belongs to Susan Garges, buried there in 1828. A Civil War chaplain (and his wife Mary) are buried there, Rev. E.W. Wakefield from "the 2nd Massachusetts Calvary" as well as their son, Harry. (There's some irony in that if not surprise). I learned some of the little church building's history and that it dated to just after the Civil War, and its predecessor *was* burned during the Civil War. One time I was inside the church. It smelled old. I imagined I could smell smoke but that was silly—it

was just old.

At my high school we were the Annandale *Atoms*. Annandale's namesake is its sister-town in Scotland, which lies along the Annan River there. The first Annandale Atom that I knew was Brent Eardley, class of 1960 and star quarterback for the Atoms! I saw him play in a Saturday efternoon game, once. The Annandale High School yearbook was *the Antenna* and our weekly school paper was the *A-Blast*. Our annual literary journal was *the Filament.* Our high school opened in 1954 in the post-World War Two, electronic, engineering age and we were all about electricity and electrons! It was built across an old field from colonial era Ossian Hall. I was born in December 1952 at George Washington University Hospital in Washington--construction began on my high school that next year--and I spent all of my growing-up years in Annandale.



1953 Aerial photo showing Annandale High School and Ossian Hall

In August of 1970 I departed to begin engineering studies at Virginia Tech. After college I was back in the area and from 1975 until 1977 Renée (my new wife) and I lived in Falls Church (five miles north of Annandale)[2] before moving to Roanoke, Virginia for a "trial" in vocational ministry. Then life for us moved on to Dallas, Texas for four years of graduate school and from there to New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1983 where

we would raise our daughters and remain for 36 years. When I retired from professional ministry and Renée from teaching high school mathematics in 2019, we moved back to Roanoke where we live now. But I have happily returned to Annandale many times (five AHS reunions so far) and have watched it change dramatically from the little town that it was, twelve miles outside of Washington D.C. on the "leading" edge (as aerospace engineers say) of the post-war expansion.

Since my youth I have been fascinated by my own hometown and it's county (Fairfax) and I always felt some enchantment being so near to D.C. with all its history. I know that perhaps *most* people do not feel this way about where they grew up… I think I inherited this love of hometown from my father who always loved his hometown. He grew up in **Superior, Wisconsin**, the eighth of eight children, having been born in 1914 just after the First World War began. He loved to return to Superior over the years, having left in 1941 at the outbreak of the Second World War when he was 27. I was with him on two return trips there, in late 1959 and summer 1967. He knew his town very well and the adjoining city of Duluth, Minnesota, as well as the surrounding parts of both states. I grew up hearing many, many stories about his hometown. My last visit to Superior was in 1973 with two college mates (Jim Warren and John Aull), and we stayed with my Aunt Edith in the house in which the Superior Damgaards had grown up. In contrast to my own hometown the town of Superior has changed very little, maybe even declined. But Annandale has changed very dramatically since I was young.

My own neighborhood in Annandale (called Columbia Pines) was (and is) on Columbia Pike which was blazed first in 1808 and originally named the Washington Gravelled Road. Its gravel was traversed by the likes of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, James Wren, John Mosby and Clara Barton. Columbia Pines was just across from the Methodist church, and abutted by what remained of "Mr. Webb's" farm. There were three water towers in the neighborhood—the smallest of which my dad dubbed "old Rusty."

There is a tendency (for some of us) to idealize the events, experiences, relationships and the times of our youth. I am sure that many people could write about their hometowns, their friends and families and the historic events that happened when they were young. But I also know that some would not want to do so.

I greatly enjoy remembering though, the people and the happenings from which I learned how to live and which defined me. They were not all happy. But the tales I will tell, occured almost all in one place: Annandale.

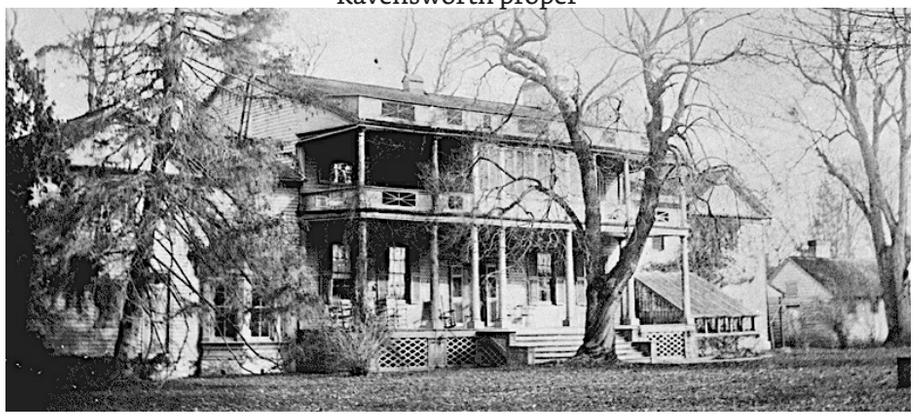
THE FITZHUGH EMPIRE

English colonizers began there—that we know of any way--since 1685, and in colonial times the area was dominated by the huge *Ravensworth* farm complex of the William Fitzhugh family. That plantation was aggrandized by its three mansions (the first to be built was **Ossian Hall**, in 1783 (and even perhaps earlier); **Oak Hill**, equally grand was built next in 1790, and remains today as a private residence – the last survivor. **Ravensworth**, 1796, which burned mysteriously in August 1926, was the main Fitzhugh juggernaut. And as with the many fields, glens and meadows of Northern Virginia its grounds were swallowed up in 1960s development and specifically, by what became the Ravensworth Shopping Center. From Ravensworth, Ossian Hall was about a half mile north by north east (at what is now 5001 Regina Drive). This is calculable by comparing 1937, 1953 and present day aerial photos of the area from the Fairfax County Historic Imagery Viewer (a wonderful resouce), cross-checked with Google Maps.

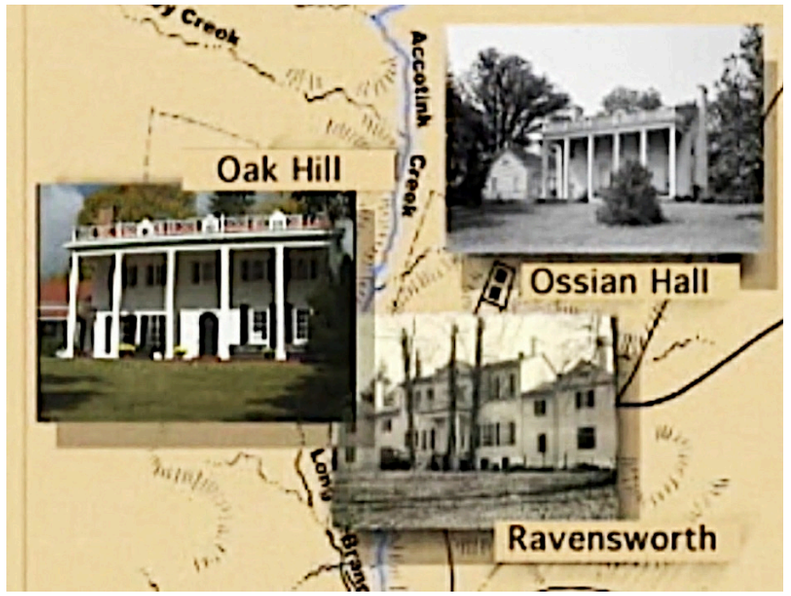
Oak Hill was about a mile northwest from Ravensworth (at what is

today 4716 Wakefield Chapel Road.) All three homes were in what became Annandale. Many other colonial, antebellum and post-Civil War dwellings would be built. Most are now long gone now.

Ravensworth proper



An exhaustive and wonderful history of Ravensworth has been written and self-published by John Browne, called *The Story of Ravensworth* (2018). It is not, however, a work of poetry or passion for the property. Browne researched many maps and lists of people and Fitzhugh family members to create a comprehensive technical history of the plantation. As such it is an invaluable resource for detailed geographical, genealogical and historic information, checked and double-checked.



In his 2009 book *Lost Plantations of the South*, Marc Matrana (Google Books) gives:

> During the Civil War, Mary Lee fled Arlington House and used Ravensworth as a refuge, but she stayed there only briefly, opting to go further south, where she felt she and her family would be safer.
>
> Ravensworth eventually was inherited by the Lee children, and two of Robert E. Lee's sons, George Washington Custis Lee and William Henry Fitzhugh "Rooney" Lee, lived there. Rooney Lee died in 1891, and the house passed to two of his sons, Robert E. Lee III and Dr. George Bolling Lee. Dr. Lee eventually obtained total ownership after his brother's death in 1922. On August 1, 1926, the plantation house was mysteriously burned. The fire, which destroyed the mansion, was thought to have been set by arsonists. Many of the priceless Lee-Custis family portraits displayed in the plantation mansion had been moved over the years, but seventeen remaining portraits were destroyed in the blaze. Dr. George Bolling Lee died in 1948, and his widow

sold the Ravensworth tract to developers in 1957. The noted stables were demolished in 1960 to make way for new subdivisions, including one called Ravensworth Farm, which still stands on the site today. A lone historical marker erected by the Department of Historic Resources in 1992 reminds residents of the property's historic past.

Ossian Hall (c. 1783, perhaps even earlier)—very near to the land on which Annandale High School would be built one hundred seventy years later in 1953. Ossian Hall remained into my childhood and my father took me to its razing in September 1959, which was a training exercise by the Annandale Fire Department. I'm sure my dad lectured his seven-year-old of some of the history but all I remember is the heat and previously one time, my dad taking me through the empty mansion. It had been frequented by the likes of George Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette, George Mason, Mrs. Mary Custis Lee and many others.

Inside with my dad that one time--I remember it vividly—he wanted to go down the stairs into the basement. I was terrified and begged him not to. Below, the burning of Ossian Hall, Sept. 13th 1959. I also remember that supervising Annandale Fire Chief Gaines had two thumbs on one hand—which we all thought was cool!

The site today, a residence at 5001 Regina Drive in Annandale

The **Oak Hill** home, no less wonderful than Ravensworth or Ossian Hall, has six bedrooms and includes 4,500 ft^2 of living space. It remains today in its modern neighborhood an out-of-time remembrance of a time long ago. Each residence has a slavery history and in the case of Oak Hill, after the Civil War three former slaves came to own small homes on the property. And graves of slaves, only one with a carved head stone, have been discovered nearby. Additionally, Thomas Jefferson was one of the famous guests who stayed there on several occasions while en route from Washington, D.C. to Monticello.

A fourth Ravensworth Fitzhugh residence (of the Mordecai Cooke Fitzhugh family), wonderfully called **Fountainbleau**, was located just west and within a stone's throw from where I learned to swim at the Sleepy Hollow Bath and Racquet Club. Presumably named for the famous 16^{th} (and earlier) century French commune, it overlooked Holmes' Run and was built sometime after 1804 and before 1832. The house burned in 1870, was rebuilt (and still standing in 1975) and then demolished in 2010 for new

development. A Fitzhugh Family Cemetery, no stones or markers, is listed still at 3502 Thomas Ct. Falls Church, Virginia. I have been unable to locate any picture of Fountainbleau.

Another great story is recorded that in travelling from Washington to Monticello in 1804, Thomas Jefferson passed exactly through where Columbia Pines, my neighborhood, would be built 140+ years in the future. He left behind a map of his route and wrote that he wanted, "to stay off the main roads." He spent the night at the new Ravensworth mansion and possibly stopped by Ossian Hall.[3]

> Note: As an afterthought, my father mentioned the French Fontainebleau (no "u") to me, perhaps visited the site during his travels in France, and stayed in the famous Miami hotel of the same name with my mother in about 1976.

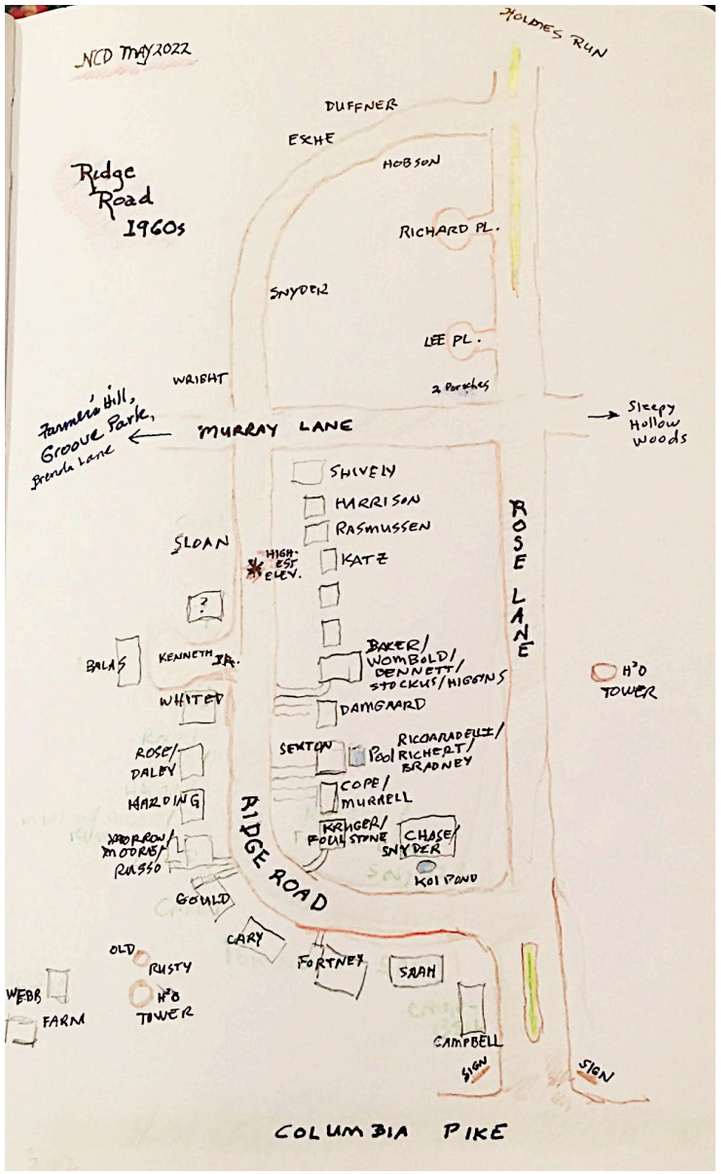
COLUMBIA PINES, ITS ENVIRONS AND ITS PEOPLE

From these august dwellings, my mind moves to my own humble but charming neighborhood which, unlike much of the rest of Annandale, looks much the same as it did when built (except the trees are taller and a few new homes have popped up). Columbia Pines was built just after the end of World War II. It comprised what was once the far northeast corner of the old Ravensworth plantation. There were nine "model" homes of different designs on the two original streets, Rose Lane and Ridge Road. Our home on "Ridge Road" (#933, now 4003) was one of these, the smallest. It is 1,010 ft^2 and is valued today at around $570,000. My parents bought it, as its second owners, in 1950 for $17,500 and sold it in 1990 for $200,000. It had two bedrooms and 1½ baths, sitting on a ¼ acre lot. Other homes in the neighborhood were larger and some had much larger lots. There were lots of trees but few hedges or fences when I was little. There was a community organization called COPICA (Columbia Pines Citizens Association) and periodically a neighborhood

directory was published and distributed to all residents. Apparently, the original developer ran out of money but the rest of the acreage was completed in the late 1950s with "lesser quality" houses (as my dad described them) by another developer named Larchmont. The adjoining fields filled with many new homes—perhaps 100--in what became Broyhill Crest, with Rolf's Heights (which is actually mentioned in a *Mamas and Papas* song.) And in 1959, Sleepy Hollow Woods which bordered our community and stretched all the way down to Sleepy Hollow Road near to where Fountainbleau was, at the brook Holmes Run, added another 100 new homes. (I have not found who Holmes was). More than once, Confederate cavalry leader Colonel John S. Mosby rode through the area with his 43rd Virginia Cavalry troopers —a legend I grew up hearing about (and whom I imagine "into" my novel, *A Ghost in August*, Amazon, 2023). Suburban expansion would only explode even more in the town from that time forward, and from when I was little.

Of capital newsworthiness to me was that in 1957 a single new, modern home was built across the street from my home, at 4008 Ridge Road. It was built for the Morrow family (John and Eve with four daughters, and one son—Janet, Pam, Barry, Van, Stacey), who lived there until 1967 when it was purchased by the Moores--a Navy pilot, his wife and three daughters—Marilyn, Rosalyn, Jocelyn. They were only there for two years and sold it to the Russos who had relocated into town from Albuquerque, New Mexico (one son and one daughter—Bill and Nancy). The dad (Frank) was a McDonnell Douglas aerospace engineer—what I dreamed of becoming. All three of these families figured heavily in my upbringing. More on them all later… Here is the neighborhood

layout as I remember it now:



I knew many of the other Ridge Road and Rose Lane homeowners and families well and at one time or another mowed the grass of many of these homeowners! I remember many of the

families--Ricciardelli, Baker, Morrow, Harding, Richert, Bradney, Sexton, Cope, Skells, Helfand, Bray, McCain, Donahue, Eardley, Chase, Saah, Fortney, Campbell, Impett, Carey, Gould, Murrell, Kruger, Foulstone, Boleyn, Ketchum, Powell, Rose, Daly, Whited, Balas, Baker, Wombold, Katz, Rasmussen, Harrison, Sloan, Snyder, Shively, Manor, Smith, Bray, Ellis, Esche, Hobson, and Duffner. **Mark Duffner** entered career football coaching and has become a successful and highly respected career NFL coach (most recently Senior Defensive Assistant with the Cincinnati Bengals). His sister **Suzanne** was in my high school class and was a good friend. She also went to Virginia Tech as did another AHS classmate, **Keith Miller** whom she married. **Mark Hamill** ("Luke Skywalker") lived in our neighborhood for a year, 1966-67 (his dad was Air Force). Perhaps a third of the dads in our neighborhood were military officers or government employees so they tended to move in and then move out in three-year cycles when transferred. Columbia Pines at the time of its construction, was the furthest community "out" from the Pentagon (my dad used to say). My dad also told me that he himself built the two entrance signs (circa 1951), which are still there, with help from a fellow engineer at Ft. Belvoir where he then worked. He also remembered using old Army field mortars to launch fireworks on July 4th, "down on Rose Lane."

Columbia Pines was twelve miles or so out into the northern Virginia countryside which was still largely farmland. Columbia Pike (Virginia Route 244) was old. It had seen (as had Virginia Route 236, the Little River Turnpike) the divisions of Union soldiers march on it through Annandale on their way to *and from* both defeats at the First and Second Battles of Manassas (in the hot summers of 1861 and '62). There was lots of other army movement in the area too, throughout most of the war. As a kid I imagined them marching by Columbia Pines (or where it would be). On a **January 1, 1862** map of the area, the acres where our neighborhood would be was called "High Ridge" and on that map perhaps a half mile northeast there are Union Army fortifications marked (called "entrenchments"). Adjacent to High Ridge on that same 1862 map was "Rose Hill", presumably the antecedent for Rose Lane. Near what is now Bradlick, there are also marked on the same map "Rebel Breastwork" (marked in red). Also on that map, is marked "Orson Hall" which was Ossian Hall.

Perhaps the eldest residents on my street in the 1960s were Mr. and Mrs. "G" and their single daughter Mae. Mr. "G" had been a farmer when young and he and his wife kept a thriving vegetable garden in their back yard. He did not seem to much like us neighborhood kids. I never learned any of their story. Mae "G" exited their small home each morning, walked to the bus line on Columbia Pike and rode each day to her job in the Pentagon. I did not know what job she had there. The "G" kept to themselves and only now do I wonder about what was their story? One anecdote: I began to notice that Mr. "G" would walk up to the corner near Columbia Pike and carefully place a paper bag into the bushes. I was curious and stealthily waited in the bushes one day for him to return home and then I went and opened the hidden bag. It had frozen vegetables in it! I returned to my watch-spot and a while later a woman got off the bus, retrieved the bag and returned to

the bus stop. I never had the chance to ask anyone what that was about, and of course it wasn't any of my business anyway! One more mystery from the land of the Grey Ghost (Mosby).

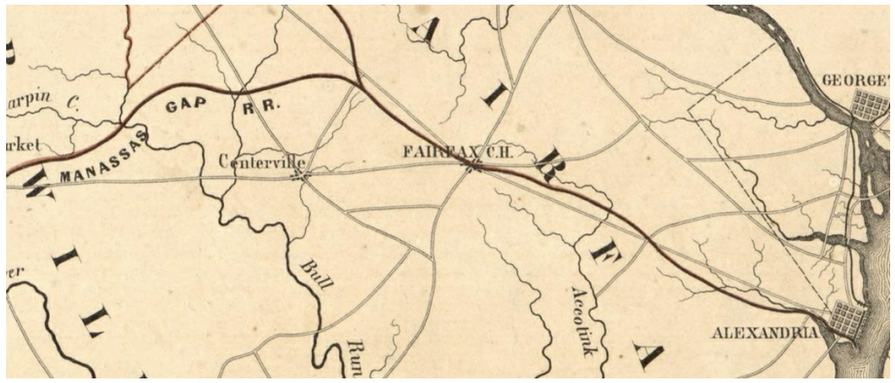
The small Methodist church in Annandale saw its share of Civil War history too, with both Union and Confederate soldiers using its facility as a field hospital. I imagined the Methodist chapel into my fictional story *A GHOST IN AUGUST* (2023).

In 1964, I was in the sixth grade at Annandale School. Long before the first school was built in the 1930s, I think, close by there had been a Union stockade during the Civil War (attacked by Mosby's *Rangers* on one occasion in 1864)—I learned this from a careful reading in the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion,* which my father showed me in the Fairfax Library (the Virginia Room) in the late 1970s. He himself had developed some first-time interest. As well, in 1963, I found a time-whitened miníe ball sticking up out of the dirt of the school baseball field. My teacher—who also lived in my neighborhood—was not impressed. At the time, our sixth-grade lore (you couldn't just "Google" the matter on your phone) informed that a two-ringed miníe ball was Confederate and one with three-rings was from the Union army. I remember mine had two rings but I also learned later that such artifacts were still commonly being found around Annandale.

When young, I was taken a few times by my dad to Accotink Creek (or perhaps to its Crook Branch) in West Annandale, across the Beltway, towards Fairfax. There, spread across the creek, were the remains (my father said) of a Civil War dam. I remember the old rocks across the creek. I don't know if he knew what he was talking about, but he did not generally make things up when there

was some historical issue in play. One Thanksgiving morning we drove over there, and I remember my mother nodding and saying, "Yup. It's true." How they would have learned that I cannot guess.

One other barely visible remnant in our town from those times is preserved in the tiny Manassas Gap Park, about a mile from where I lived—on Hummer Road and Royce Court. In this small Park preserve sits the remnant-piece of the railroad bed for the unfinished late 1850s Manassas Gap Railroad that was supposed to run from Alexandria to Manassas. (Its proposed route is marked on the previous 1862 map by the dark, dashed line). The Civil War terminated its construction although some of the infrastructure survived. It was this same line that saw a fierce battle during Second Manassas, at the "railroad cut." I learned of this remaining whisper of those times when I was a senior in high school and my friend Tom (now Basil), who lived on Hummer Road, showed me the remaining railroad embankment, which quite amazingly with all that area's development, can still be seen. (Tom, by the way, was taking me to visit classmate Dave Kuniansky, who lived back "behind the cut" I remember, and who possessed a unique skill: Dave played the *sitar*).



Dad had a powerful sense of history and current events and locations of significance. I went along with my parents to the opening of the first section of the Capital Beltway and also to the first day and dedication of Dulles International Airport on November 17th 1962, where we heard speaking from a great distance, President John F. Kennedy and former president, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. There was the annual July 4th fireworks under the Washington Monument, to the burning of Ossian Hall (as mentioned), and one visit to Fort Ward—a remaining Civil War fort from the ring of fortifications erected after First Manassas, and many other events.

Dad didn't seem to know much about the Civil War, except to remark, "Well, the right side won." He held no interest in Arlington House (nor its Cemetery), Richmond nor any of the many Civil War battlefields and engagements around the state of Virginia—one visit to Manassas, while hosting his older brother Harry on a visit. Only later, after college, did I begin to visit many Virginia battlefields. I never learned until much later that almost all Fairfax County residents had voted <u>for</u> secession. I never heard in my youth of the frequent pillaging of local farms by both Union and Confederate soldiers (including on at least one occasion Ossian Hall). My parents never discussed slavery, or the injustices inflicted upon the African slaves (or any others), nor of the long difficult plight of former slaves *after* the Civil War. My Dad never heard of Union General O.O. Howard, after whom

Howard University was named. He would have shrugged to hear of the earlier driving west of the native Americans who once lived, hunted and fished all over Fairfax County. He might have mentioned a time or two their simple footpaths which would later become wagon roads and eventually major motor vehicle arteries. My parents were not derisive of these pieces of history—just uninterested. They would have dryly remakred, "It's just what was."

The passions of the 21st century were not yet invented in the 1950s and 60s. Ideas like "racial reconciliation," "remunerations," "critical theories," and any kind of enforced "diversity-equity-inclusion" would have been completely alien to them. My parents and their contemporaries in our neighborhood were still processing the Great Depression, *especially* the Second World War, the Korean War, and then with huge concern the Cold War and its stepchild, the Vietnam War and only after 1964, the civil rights movement—which they ascribed primarily to Lyndon Baines Johnson and media darlings like Adam Clayton Powell. They were little interested in the the Freedom Ride, the Watts riots, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, or any of the other civil rights engines. Even less would they have been supporters of ERA, LGBTQ+, sexual liberation or other comets of the Age of Aquarius that so animated and electrified my generation.

While growing up, in school or at home, I heard only very occasionally about General Edward Braddock (1695-1755) and his hidden chest of payroll gold (which my mother and other area residents all liked to joke that they knew where along Braddock Road it was buried.) I heard only occasionally of Colonel John Mosby, Generals Joseph Johnston, P.G.T. Beauregard, Stonewall Jackson or Generals Irwin McDowell, O.O. Howard, William Sherman or John Pope all of whom spent a good bit of time in Fairfax County. In the 1970's dad told me about "Frying Pan Church," a small village church in the northwest part of Fairfax

County, with which Mosby had some history. It was an early Baptist church for the region (1791) where the fundamentalist beliefs of its members also attracted free blacks and slaves to the congregation and where from the beginning, blacks were listed with whites as members, baptized together with whites in the springs behind the meeting house and interred together in the adjacent burial grounds. I never knew that Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross (for which my mother worked for a time in the 1940s), had first tended wounded troops in Culpeper and elsewhere around Northern Virginia. These people were barely ghosts.

Slavery, as a *northern Virginia* reality was never mentioned. Slaves did not exist in the thousands in northern Virginia (as they did further south) but they did exist. My Dad did tell me that a small community of African-Americans (although that designation was not yet in vogue) lived on Lincolnia Road, down Columbia Pike towards Barcroft which were, he said, descended from a community of ex-slaves in the area. Their church was Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church which he pointed out to me once.

My parents seemed interested only in the colonial history or the post-Second World War history of our town and then mainly only my dad. I was taken one time to visit Carlyle House (1752) in Alexandria with great verve and of course, to Mount Vernon several times (usually when relatives were visiting)—always wondering when viewing George Washington's tomb (I remember), "Are his bones really IN that tomb?"

Of course, to look back and think that your parents *should* have taught you about this or that is quite unfair. I am sure my father's parents didn't teach him as much as he would have liked to know about Denmark (where they came from). I doubt whether my mother's parents taught much about their family's long heritage or the history of Tennessee (except as it connected with the Restoration Movement Churches of Christ, in which most of them were thoroughly entrenched). Because *I* am interested in a

particular focus of history—albeit very local—does not mean that *they* should have been just as fascinated with northern Virginia. They gave to me what they could.

Here are two aerial shots of the neighborhood, from 1937 -

And from 1953 -

A small 1950s U.S. Army antiaircraft base[4] was on Gallows Road (marked above), across from what we all called "Farmer's Hill," perhaps three football fields away from my house. I remember my dad taking me to peer into the front gate, so I must have been very young. The Annandale Chamber of Commerce website tells the story:

> Annandale folklore includes the story that a NIKE missile defense base was located in Annandale during the 1950's... In fact, the Army base located along Gallows Road was an antiaircraft Artillery Gun Site, listed as W-63, a precursor to the NIKE missile defense program in Northern Virginia. This base was in existence from 1951-1957 when the residential community of Broyhill Crest was largely completed. Obviously, an artillery base cannot operate with shells raining over the homes of a large housing project. In the year before the base closed, the artillery sites were dismantled, and munitions removed. In 1959, the property on which the actual base was situated was sold and developed into the housing community now present. The base had always been closed to the public which may have spurred the speculation of what was housed within. In order to quell some of the gossip, the troops participated in the 1953 Annandale Parade winning the designation of the best marching unit in the parade.

In the winter of 1967, as a freshman at Annandale High School, classmate Jeff Dickey (another friend whose father was an army officer) told me that the base was once where his residential subdivision was located, on Gallows Road. I actually walked there, to look for any remaining evidences. I found none, to my disappointment. Any prospects for such rare "archeological" discoveries enchanted me!

Another hard-bitten neighbor family—from three doors up from me—were the Ks, but for just three years. I was good friends with the son—and got into all kinds of hijinks with him (and in trouble with the Dad, a U.S. Army full colonel). One Saturday we melted a penny with his dad's blow torch in the garage. His Dad caught

us and read us the riot act *not* for endangering ourselves with a 1000° flame (this was when I learned the melting point of copper - from a chart at a display of chemistry set supplies at the local "Sports & Hobbies") but for defacing a piece of U.S. currency, which to the colonel was the greater crime. A happier memory is that this family invited me to accompany them on several weekend Airstream trailer rallies, always a treat! They owned the largest Airstream made at the time.

One another Saturday morning, Colonel K was on a social call to a friend of his in Arlington—he took his son, Dick, and me along. The colonel's friend was a USMC "Marine One" helicopter pilot (he might have been Army), in the weeks before President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas. (A picture of the Army helicopter is at the end of this story). I do not remember his name. But I do remember that in the Army or Marine pilot's home there was a bright red telephone on the wall. I pulled the receiver from the wall when no one was looking, and put it to my ear, to hear on the other end the automatic identifying receptionist voice (no ring first), "White House." I hung up and never mentioned it to the colonel or to his son.

On another occasion we exploded a whole case of "caps" with his dad's large wooden mallet in one whack, "Boom!" The Dad came running into the garage (again) very upset. I was merely sent home. I do not know what punishments were inflicted on Dick, my friend. I plainly remember my dad asking when I walked in the door, "Whatcha been up to?" I replied, "Nuthin. Just having fun with Dick." I remember my dad's eyebrow rising but he said nothing. He may have heard the "boom" or received a call from the colonel. This was a strange nuance of how my dad raised me, with lots of tolerance for such things; things, much like he would have done as a kid. Nothing was said though and despite all these things, I still joined the family on Airstream weekend "trailer rallies" to the Blue Ridge mountains which were wonderful times. There, I remember, the colonel and his wife relaxed (as did the

kids).

Built in 1957, the house at 4008 Ridge Road was for that time very modern. Barry Morrow was my best friend from that year until 1966 when I entered Annandale High School. Barry was still in the 8th grade and our friendship abruptly ended then. We spent our childhood together. We explored every nook and cranny of his 1957 "new" house—it had a cool attic and a neat car port with a ping pong table. We spent many days carving out "village" streets in his back yard for our little *Matchbox* cars and *Minitank* military vehicles. We did the same in my backyard—just where I recently learned from the 1937 map there was once a road! Barry's father threw a baseball in their backyard for us, many, many times in a three-person game called "hotbox." Mr. Morrow had a severity about him but he was always good to me. The two older sisters were also nice to me, Janet—who was married to Paul Barner—and Pam, who was perhaps four years older than Barry and me. (His birthday was Dec. 7th and mine is Dec. 10th. We were both born in the same year.) We roamed the wider neighborhood together and the days of summer were long and hot.

One summer, while my Dad was in Europe with the Army, a neighbor boy, older, high school I guess, invited Barry and myself into his basement to "show us something." We stupidly accompanied him. His parents were not home. I do not remember his name but he lined us up against the basement block wall and told us to stand still. He pulled out a .22 rifle and shot several rounds into the wall above our heads. "Just target practice," he laughed and I remember that he laughed loudly. We managed to get out through the open garage door. I told my mother. Barry told his father who called the police. I never heard what reaction the police measured towards our neighbor. But Mr. Morrow and my mother were plainly upset. I remember that my father, upon his return from Europe, went to see Mr. Morrow and was told, "It's been taken care of." I never learned what that meant but not long after that the family moved out.

Ridge Road home with the "target practice" basement – "dog bite" location was next door

An earlier memory in our neighborhood, was my being torn up by a neighbor's dog. I was about five (summer 1958) and was taken to National Hospital near the Pentagon for surgery. I remember the wife of the family was a Christian Scientist, I think—first time for me to hear that term--and although she was a nurse herself, told my mother that I didn't need to go to the hospital. My mother insisted—it was another time that my father was in Europe. My ear was torn open, as I remember it, and then surgically repaired without much anesthesia. The father was a highly respected Air Force full colonel, and I remember him holding my hand on the table as the doc sewed me up. For whatever protocol was in place, the dog had to be gotten rid of. Their son never forgave me for that. I remember that the dog's name was Frisky. Stuff always seemed to happen when *my* dad was overseas!

In Junior High (which at that time was called "Intermediate School") I had become friends with several older boys, through the Boy Scouts: Al Wright, John Messina, Mark McCain and Chris Ramey (whose father was yet another colonel that my father knew). Chris introduced me to Avalon Hill board games, which took days to play.

In 1967 the Morrows moved to Charlottesville, and I lost track of Barry until 1972 when I saw him as a fellow student at Virginia Tech--that doesn't seem like much of a separation of years now--we had lunch at Hardee's together once. A few years ago, I managed to find him on the internet. He had had a very successful career. I don't know where he lives now.

4008 Ridge Road then became the home of the Moore family which included three daughters. The eldest, Marilyn, was a college student at Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia, a location which seemed to me to be a long way away! I only met Marilyn once or twice and she was very nice to me. CDR Moore was a Navy pilot and his younger two daughters, Rosalyn and Jocelyn, became friends with me. I took (we walked) Jocelyn on one "date," to the Annandale Theatre, to view the Steve McQueen movie *Papillon* one Saturday afternoon, but that was not a great film to take a date to! (A first of a long string of dating miscalculations.) "Roz" was a star athlete and a year ahead of me at AHS—she was so well accomplished! I was a pseudo-athlete too (wrestling) but I admired her achievements. The Moores only stayed in Annandale for two years and I still remember sadly waving goodbye to this family on July 12th 1969—funny that I remember that date—as they moved to Georgia. The sisters presented me with a silver I.D. bracelet with my name engraved, a treasure that I wore throughout college and they each stayed in touch with me

through my first two years of college and then we fell out of touch. In years recently though, after so many decades, contact is happily re-established courtesy of Facebook. Rosalyn lives in Georgia and Jocelyn in Wyoming.

In mid-July 1969 the Russo family moved in. The parents were friendly to me. The son was a college student at UNC Chapel Hill and a very good guy to talk with. Bill "tutored me" in philosophy, sitting on their front lawn, and got me to read (or attempt to read) Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* and some of the writings of George Hegel and Karl Marx—very heady stuff. He later became Chairman of the Republican Party for the state of North Carolina but has died in recent years. The sister, Nancy Jo, was a wonderful young woman, four years my junior but I rarely saw her after I went to Virginia Tech. The father, Frank, enchanted me as an aerospace engineer for McDonnell Douglas. In August 1969 I was invited to be the family guest at the 1969 Air Exposition at Dulles Airport. I was seated with the Russos at the McDonnell Douglas V.I.P. tent. It was the occasion of the first ever public take-off of the new C-5A *Galaxy* and the *Blue Angels* were also performing. They landed, pulled their four F-4 Phantoms up to the trailer and I was introduced to the pilots. I remember that Mr. Russo was quite upset at the mechanical condition of the Phantoms—I remember him saying that in his opinion they should not have been flying at all! Frank Russo would invite me to their living room and talk about aeronautics and aircraft design with me. He had a friend who was an engineer for Lockheed and that engineer sent me a large packet of aircraft drawings. I was taking Aircraft Drafting during my senior year at AHS and Mr. Schwartz was impressed at my "connections." He, himself, was a B-24 Liberator navigator from the Second World War and walked with a severe limp, from a crash of his bomber.

March 7th 1970 was a great day for me. It was a Saturday and it was the day of a total solar eclipse! My father rigged a contraption so you could watch the eclipse

without actually looking at the sun. Also that day I received in the mail my acceptance letter to Va Tech, a package of Lockheed aircraft drawings from the engineer that Mr. Russo knew, and my Dad let me use the family car to drive to Jellef's in Arlington to purchase the new King Crimson album *In the Court of the Crimson King.* I slept with a smile on my face that night! The Burling Tract issue was in full play then too. More about that later…

For three years the local Boy Scouts troop was important to me, and I joined Troop #674 in 1964. I finished my time in Scouts with the rank of "Star." We camped every month, even in the most extreme weather. We hiked into our camping areas (including on the Quantico Marine reservation in the dead of winter), cooked meals over wood fires, pitched tents, slept on the ground and learned teamwork. We experienced humbling and even what might be interpreted as hazing rituals but we loved each other and were proud of our Troop and its leaders. On one "patrol campout", which was in the woods along the Capitol Beltway, we were awakened by an unearthly, screaming animal which terrified us all. It was on that campout also, that I lost a Hitler Youth knife that my father bad brought back from the war and which, for some dark reason, I loved to carry around–I believed one of my patrol mates stole it, an irony which violated Boy Scout honor unforgivably. To my mind that crime overshadowed the irony of my carrying something once worn proudly by a Nazi.

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As in the memories of many "neighborhood kids," the stores of note are always fun to reminisce about. On Columbia Pike, down the hill from Columbia Pines, there was the A&P Supermarket, Drug Fair (which was robbed through the ceiling one dark and stormy night! Friend Jeff Kemp and I played many scratch games of handball there behind the store--our many handballs are probably still on the roof), High's Dairy Store, Sports and Hobbies (my favorite), Tops drive-in (home of the "Sirloiner"), Three Chefs, Deaver's Appliances (run by "Old Man Deaver," my parents called him), Clark's Music—so very cool, had

lots of guitars, guitar equipment and an old, huge dog who lay in the store, owned by Mr. Clark. The Safeway, next to Annandale School, was my mother's weekly grocery shopping destination and usually I accompanied her. In 1960 there were large displays of toys and I remember fawning over a space launch set, with which my parents surprised me my 8th birthday—purchased at the Safeway.

Behind the Safeway supermarket there was a little dress shop called *Iva Trice.* It was my mother's favorite clothing store and from time to time my dad would stop there on his way home from work and purchase a dress or blouse for her. He would proudly present it to her, boxed and wrapped. She never, ever was disappointed or chided him. It was one lovely and happy connection they always had. If he presented her with a clothing or jewelry gift, she always loved them! In later years there was also the *Thrift Store* which was a favorite of my dad.

And of course, there was Kerlin's Korner—a convenience store, at the corner of the Little River Turnpike and Columbia Pike (the white house in the lower center of the cover picture, 1950). It was called Shirkey Drug in my earliest memories. In colonial days it was the location for the Turnpike toll booth and the large log turnstile, which my dad said was still there lying behind the store in the days when they first moved to Annandale in 1950. Farther down the Little River Turnpike was Capone's Music. The father of a high school classmate, Cathy Capone, owned that music store but

sadly it burned when I was in high school. The morning after the fire—no one was around--my friend Jeff and I crawled through the burned ruins looking for music flotsam and jetsam! I went away with a burned horn end of a saxophone which I kept for years —from today's perspective to "loot" a burned-out store would be criminal. In 1968 it was just what we did.

On the other side of Columbia Pike was People's Drug and Giant Food as well as "Dawson's Small Arms of the World" which had an indoor rifle and pistol range in the basement. I often took my .22 Mossberg rifle, slung over my shoulder, down to the range to shoot. Can you imagine me doing that today? There was also a "surfer shop" there, what would later come to be called a "head shop." One Saturday I purchased a black "surfer cross" on a chain (they came in different colors) and wore it home around my neck. When he saw it, my dad flew into a rage and insisted that I immediately return the small bit of "bling" for a refund, which I did. I did not realize that the "surfer cross" looked just like a Wehrmacht Iron Cross from the German Army. We would have none of THAT in 4003 Ridge Road!

Across the parking lot from the "surfer shop" was the new Slot Car Racing Track. It was the summer of 1966. This was the rage for some of us as young high school guys (a few girls I think too). There was another such establishment in Springfield too, but we couldn't walk to that place. You bought a slot car kit (for me the Cox *Cheetah*), built the car, jazzed it up as best you could with special slicks, a liquid lubricant for the tires called "Tiger Milk", decals, custom painting, carried it in a special fishing tackle type case and spent Saturdays racing your friends at the Track. I was amazed at how quickly this fad came and went. By my junior year in high school this amusement fad had completely died! No one was even talking about it anymore.

There was the area hardware store, Star Supply (which forever set in my head what a hardware store should smell like), a print shop where my dad got large sheets of drawing paper for me and

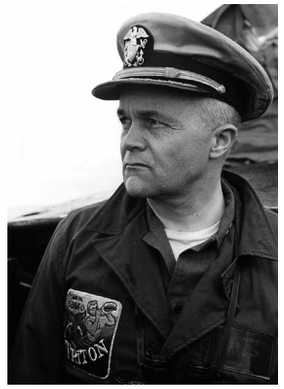
the Annandale Bowling Alley—a place of frequent visits for me and my friends through the eighth grade. It was the place I first learned the finer aspects of pinball. We also bowled occasionally too. I also remember the French Fries from the grill, being the finest a 7th and 8th grade boy's palate could find!

We walked or perhaps rode our bicycles—everywhere! Into the woods, up hills, down hills, to school, to the store, to friends' homes, going by various girls' homes continually (when we got up our courage), in races, in the middle of Columbia Pike and on and on. Sometimes we clothes-pinned playing cards to the wheels to produce a wonderful sound. Our parents had no idea where we were—it would not really have occurred to us to tell them. We just had to be home by dinner time! One day two friends had the brilliant idea to turn their bicycles upside down. They were up on the hill at Mr. Webb's farmhouse. They then got the back wheel turning fast, drop a handful of rocks on to the turning wheel, which rocketed them out on to cars on Columbia Pike. They only did this once, and then thought better of it… This would be in the Top Twenty stupidest things they ever did.

One of the most important families in our neighborhood (at least to me) were the Eardleys on Rose Lane—among the earliest new occupants of Columbia Pines. They were early great friends to my parents in the 1950s. Ed and Marge were transplants from Utah, and Mr. Eardley, an electrical power engineer, travelled a lot. Their son Brent, I mentioned earlier, was ten years older than me. Their daughter, Linda, was five years older than me and she often babysat for me when I was young. My parents adored Linda. She went off to college to Penn State in 1965 and it was many years before I reconnected with her—she and her husband Daryl had moved into the Rose Lane house and I visited them with my just-graduated-from-high-school-daughter, Jocelyn in 2000. They showed us around, took us out to eat and made a real impression on Jocelyn! Daryl was a court judge in Washington and was completely charming. Our daughter is now

an attorney and Jocelyn remembers what a great time we had with Linda and Daryl. Sadly, Daryl passed away on Christmas Day in 2006 at just 60 years old. But I am still happily in touch with Linda who lives in Loudon County now. There seem very few left now who remember, or that have any interest in talking about our neighborhood in the 50s and 60s but Linda and I have shared many memories of our growing up in Columbia Pines!

Because so many neighborhood Dads were military, there was lots of moving in and moving out. We had some well-known officers in our locale, too. Captain Edward Beach (1918-2003) lived on Rose Lane. He was a highly decorated U.S. Navy submarine officer and best-selling author (*Run Silent, Run Deep*). He was part of the Battle of Midway and many other WWII engagements, earned the Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, two Bronze stars, etc. was the first naval officer to circumvent the globe wholly submerged in a submarine, and he as a Naval aide to President Eisenhower. I never met him but my father knew him and greatly respected him. Another neighbor was U.S. Air Force Major General Reginald L. Clizbe (1916-2003), another World War II veteran. He was a good friend of my father. When I was in perhaps the sixth grade, my parents were at a neighborhood cocktail party, me being babysat by Joan Bennett—a high school student on our other next door, whose father was an Air Force full colonel. I had gone to bed when the doorbell wrang. Joan answered it and there stood an Air Force two-star General in full uniform asked for "an audience with young Master Neil Damgaard." Joan was flustered when my own father jumped out from behind the bushes and put Joan's fears to rest. At my father's military funeral in 1994, General Clizbe's wife and daughter attended the event at the Bushnell National Cemetery in Florida with great kindness to my mother and me. The daughter, Candace, was a childhood playmate from Columbia Pines. Clizbe and Beach, below:



Another neighborhood luminary was U.S. Navy Captain Audley H. McCain (1919-2004). No relation, to my knowledge, to the more famous also Captain and later Senator John McCain. Our Captain McCain served in and commanded destroyers throughout his WWII and Korean careers—and my father told me that he was involved at destroyer command level with the blockade of Cuba during the October 1962 Missile Crisis. His son, Mark, was the neighbor friend who invited me to try the Boy Scout troop in our area. I looked up to Mark as one of the older boys in our locale (2 years older than me) who seemed to watch out for us younger plebes!

He was joined by Tony Stockus (whose father also yet another Air Force colonel), John Messina and Al Wright, all seniors when I was a freshman. Tony was in the AHS Band and very proud of his role there. He graduated and went off to Michigan State Universiry. Messina and Wright were also Boy Scouts and I had a good experience with the Scouts. Interestingly, I recently submitted a remembrance article to a Facebook page themed by remembering Northern Virginia that allegedly has 50,000 members. I had submitted a number of reflection-articles (maybe 14 at that point) about growing up there which had received lots of good responses and comments. But this one that I did about being in the Boy Scouts was flatly rejected. I had nothing but good remembrances about my three years in that troop (#674) and shared nothing

but happy memories. But for some reason—no explanation given—it was flatly rejected. I guess the BSA are no longer considered by some at least, as an honorable organization. Sad…. One of the finest male leaders I (as a young man) ever met was our Scoutmaster, retired Coast Guard CPO Richard Eastman. My Dad thought the world of him too.

As to the Missile Crisis of October 1962 those of us with military Dads were pretty nervous in our families. (Remember the AHS school newspaper, the "*A-Blast*?") At the intersection of Gallows Road and Columbia Pike there was a green, steel tank-like model of a bomb shelter. It must have been a marketing ploy. We used to lob "M 80s" into it to hear the boom. But these were scary times and my Dad had a special identification card (which I still possess) for him to use to gain entry to the Redstone Arsenal in Alabama in case there was a nuclear attack. I never asked him how he was to get there or what would become of my mom and I in such a case. But his orders were clear. Only many years later was it revealed how very close the United States and the Soviet Union came to the brink in October 1962. No ABM system existed, no "Iron Dome" system as the Israelis now possess. I think it was in those days, around my tenth birthday that I began to learn to pray.

The assassination of President Kennedy was felt everywhere of course. In my neighborhood school was closed for about a week. On that day, our teacher was given the news in the afternoon of 22 November 1963. She was so upset that she sent us out to the water fountain in threes to give her the chance to compose herself. I will never forget the cynical comment one of my classmates in my "three" remarked at the drinking fountain, "Ah, the bum deserved it." Even at the time I was amazed that any of us could be so cynical although I did not learn that word for years. We were sent home early and school did not resume for something like a week.

My parents and I watched the First Lady and the children on television as the President was laid to rest in Arlington Cemetery and the "eternal flame" was lit. I don't think that we neighborhood

kids had any idea at all who Lyndon Baines Johnson was, a wily old holdover from FDR days. We quickly learned though, the names Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby. I just remember watching the funeral on television, how cold it was outside, and my parents' somberness and their sad faces…

The Cuban Missile Crisis, the Kennedy and King assasinations, Watergate, the fall of Saigon, September 11th, our flight from Afghanistan… National crises do not happen often but when they do, they make a deep impression on us.

Rixey Manor, near Culpeper, was built in 1801 and a happier memory comes from my dad's occasional summoning of a tree specialist to remove or prune trees whom my father just called "Rixeyville." The man came to Annandale for work from Rixeyville, seven miles north of Culpeper and which dates to the Rixey family plantations there, from before the Civil War. Its post office began in 1818. My lifelong friend, Sandy Young, whom I first met at Freshman Orientation at Virginia Tech in July 1970, grew up in Rixeyville.

I remember all my Annandale Elementary School teachers. I began there in the second grade with Mrs. Baker. I had attended a private little school called Mary Dale School, taught by Mrs. Bolding in her home, beginning at 5 years old. It was located "up the hill" from the Fountainbleau home site, where I would later learn to swim at the Sleepy Hollow Bath and Racquet Club (which is still there). My parents wanted me in school and I was always a little emotionally behind because of that. In the third grade my teacher was Mrs. Hayden, whom my father favored because evidently, she hailed from the same hometown as did he in Wisconsin. I began the

fourth grade with Mrs. Lawler but spent most of the year in class with Mrs. Merrow who was the youngest teacher I ever had. It was in that year that I broke my ankle and had it in a plaster cast for six weeks. She was sweet to me, especially when I broke my ankle and had to hobble with a half-cast for six weeks.

Also, it was then that we all watched the beginnings of the space program with Mercury spacecraft launches on a television in our classroom! In the fifth grade it was Mrs. Spruill (in the class production of *Charlotte's Web* I was assigned the role of one of the three sideline pigs, with one line, in costume with curly tail, to Hazel Hartsoe's "Charlotte"); and in the sixth grade—when it seemed like life really began—it was Mrs. Elsie Covell. I have long wondered at their stories, each of them.

Mrs. Merrow

Mrs. Covell

Elsie Covell was a person to be reckoned with. She lived on Rose Lane in my very neighborhood, was good friends with Marge Eardley and whenever visiting Marge, I imagined they were talking about me! But when she showed up one day at school with a new beige Chevrolet "SS" (Super Sport) Impala with wire wheels, Mrs. Covell moved up on her male students' coolness ratings to top! During that year she moved me across the classroom (for "talking") to the same row of desks as a new student who had moved to the area from Texas—Jeff Kemp. We became lifelong friends.

Jeff, AHS class of 1970 classmate, very patiently taught me how to play guitar, out of Beatles books. His family moved onto Justine Drive in 1963. Jeff's father (deceased just recently) was a U.S. Air Force full Colonel. Bert Kemp had grown up in New York City and had been a B-17 navigator in Italy in WWII, flew B-26s in Korea and was involved in the Manned Orbiting Laboratory (the MOL) in later years. He was another powerful adult to be reckoned with in our neighborhood. Jeff had two older sisters, Gina and Victoria. His mother's name was Betty, and was always kind to me. My parents did not know the Colonel or his wife, but I was around them frequently. Of all the fathers in the neighborhood, our two dads were perhaps the toughest. Each had lots of combat experience from the Second World War and maybe a lingering PTSD figured into their psyches. Jeff had (as I remember) a quick mind for mathematics and logic, and went to Purdue but after a year transferred to the University of Wisconsin, Madison where he graduated in psychology. I visited him there in 1973. (Excursus--What I remember from that trip was West Mifflin Street in Madison which *seceded* from the United States for a time. Ah! Those were such serious days! But the city responded with, "fine. Pick up your own garbage, then." So mountains of garbage sat and mounted up on the sidewalks in front of homes. Apparently, this induced the new "country's" leaders to re-apply for admission to the Union! I don't remember Jeff thinking any

of this was funny. Post note: about forty years later, I would have an "elder" in our church in Dartmouth who was an accounting professor. Dr. Larry Logan had been a young professor at UW-Madison in those days. He remembered West Mifflin Street.)

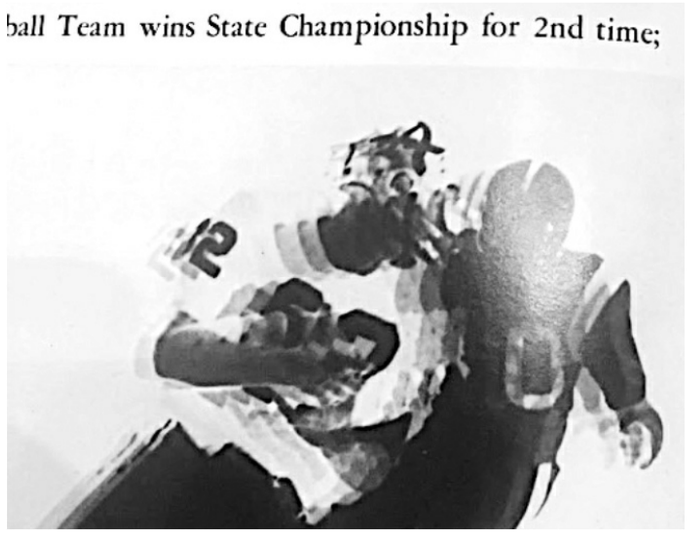
All through high school my buddies and I threw a baseball or a football in the street. For hours. We had a bat too and would hit the ball to each other. We played the hide right off countless baseballs. That was how we learned what was *inside* a baseball! If the ball hit the overhead powerlines, which it often did and could be heard loudly inside our house, my father would storm out of my house and holler at us. I would invariably promise to make sure that this would not happen again. Until it did again. My Dad was the loudest yeller in the neighborhood I think, and usually the only one of all the dads who would actually come out into the fray and yell at me. It was always scary to me.

In March 1968 I took the PSAT at Marshall High School in Falls Church—I remember it was snowing. While I was taking the test, my parents went exploring to "kill time." They ended up in Herndon. There they noticed a dilapidated, old house with the front door open and "swinging in the breeze" as Dad said. They were intrigued and first, they drove to the Herndon Police Station and inquired as to the house's ownership. The police informed them, so my parents said, that "no one owns that house—it's just an eyesore." So back my parents went, entered into the dark house and found no one inside. They began to survey the house's contents and found many obviously nineteenth century artifacts around. There were vases and brass figurines and artwork. Dad said there was a complete set of "Balzac" on a collapsed shelf."[5] I had never heard that word before nor knew anything of the French novelist/playwright, Honoré de Balzac [1799-1850]. They decided to help themselves to a few of items, which they researched and kept until 1990 when they relocated to Florida. They left the set of Balzac writings. This whole incident was such an uncharac-teristic kind of undertaking for them. It fascinated

me for years.

The Murrell family lived two doors up from me and their son Steve was a local hero. He was star quarterback for the Atoms and led them to two state football championships. But more important to me was that he was a good friend, though three years older than me. He would come throw the football out in the street with us and he was so good none of us felt like we could even hardly hold a ball! He went to LSU on a football scholarship while in college, and when home he would take me to concerts (he also loved guitars!) Steve took me to Baltimore with him to hear Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young play just after Kent State—the first public performance, Neil Young said, of his new song *Ohio.* Steve was 20 and I was 17. Steve also took me with him to *The Ark* in Alexandria, a hipster concert venue in a small former church, to hear Poco play, the loudest concert I ever attended. I lost touch with Steve after those days, which I regretted. His Dad was another Army colonel and his older brother attended West Point. I think Steve lives in Atlanta now.

Much could be said about the AHS football dynasty. It was exciting to the whole town. Coaches Ed Henry and Bob Hardage were legendary. Henry even made it into the story of *Remember the Titans* in the 2000 movie. The whole atmosphere from 1965 to 1968 was mesmerized by the AHS Atoms teams. In 1967 the Atoms ended up ranked #3 in the nation and the team had three All-American players on one team: Rob Frere, Jeff Von Beulwitz and Ted Tedesco. We were undefeated and the team seemed larger than life. I barely hung on with the J.V.s and only because that was the first year, I believe, that they decided to "cut" no one…. From the 1968 AHS *Antenna* yearbook…



Wrestling was huge too, for AHS and we had several champions on that team too (on which I participated but only ever wrestled on varsity once!) Steve Willis was a perennial state champion – we were very proud of him!

Other rival high schools that loomed large in our awareness in my youth included W.T. Woodson (which we learned to hate), J.E.B. Stuart (who ended AHS's undefeated streak on a sad Friday night), Fairfax, Falls Church (noted for their wonderful marching band), Marshall, R.E. Lee, Jefferson (now ranked as the #1 high school in the nation), T.C. Williams, Washington & Lee, Yorktown, Fort Hunt and others… Many of these schools have been renamed, their original names blotted out by modern political sensitivities.

For my sophomore and junior years of high school there was an afternoon touch football game across the two front lawns across the street from my home. Our tribe of teens and pre-teens was large for this afternoon event. We wore the grass off both front lawns down to the dirt, which I can only imagine was a frustration to the owners. But it was *their* kids too, involved in these front yard gridiron matches. One of the homeowner couples was two high school teachers (the Hardings) and I learned later, much loved by the students in their high school classes. I think they

were pretty indulgent of our neighborhood athletics. There were teenage girls and guys involved and well, we were staying *there* many afternoons, in full view of adult supervision!

In 1965, a family of five sons and a recently widowed father moved in next door to me in Annandale. The residents before them had installed an in-ground swimming pool—a first in our area. The Sexton sons became a whole new addition to the social structure and equilibrium of the neighborhood. The eldest, George, was an architecture student at Virginia Tech and he is the one who recommended that I look into that university later--which of course, I did. When he was at home between sessions, he was a good, older friend to me. George went on to become a very successful architect, founded George Sexton Associates with offices in Washington, New York and London. But I have had no contact with him since my freshman year at Virginia Tech when he was a fifth-year senior. The second son, Jack, became a very successful veterinarian (University of Georgia) and in 2019 was awarded the Paul F. Landis Veterinarian of the Year Award in Richmond. I remember Jack to have been popular in high school and his graduation party in Columbia Pines was legendary! Hundreds of his friends attended and the neighborhood took months to recover (so it was said)! Third son, Bill, was in my high school class, but I was never close to him and did not know him well. Fourth and fifth sons, Jim and Dan, were good friends with many memories made together. I am still friendly with each, on Facebook.

Their father, George senior, was a wonderfully friendly gentleman to me and an aerospace engineer, a thing which I aspired to become! He often welcomed me to use their swimming pool or come into their home to watch football on television with him and his sons. I was always sad to know that his wife, and the sons' mother, had died of cancer before their moving to Columbia Pines. The Sextons provided one other pleasant memory for me: they had two beagles, Teddy and Suzy who were let out every morning

into the neighborhood. Off they ran up Ridge Road and to who knows where? Every afternoon they came running home. I always loved those two dogs and I always wondered where they went every day?

This family was so important to me that I wrote up a fuller and separate story of them, which I include as an appendix. I hope they feel the honor in which I remember them!

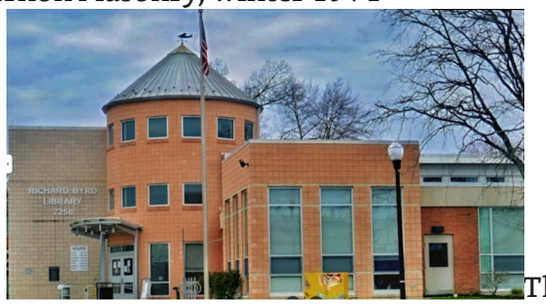
In February 1966 there was a giant blizzard. Across the street from me lived an older couple, Mrs. Dottie Daley and her husband, Air Force Colonel Daley. This older couple liked me and had me into their home for food and hired me to mow their lawn often. They had a large Poodle named Susie, whom they adored. For this blizzard, the colonel was out of town and Mrs. Daley hired Tony Stockus from next door—AHS senior—and me to shovel her walkways and driveway. There was so much snow it took the two of us (no snowblowers in those days) eight solid hours to clean their property. There was something like two feet of snow everywhere. She paid us the sum of twenty dollars, ten dollars each. I had never before seen (or possessed) that much money at once!

I began my employment history mowing lawns all over Columbia Pines from the seventh grade on. I used my dad's lawnmower and he taught me how to keep it in good maintenance. Generally, for $3/lawn, I worked for female homeowners except one: Mr. Foulstone, who now lived in the Kruger house (the Krugers, had since been Army-transferred). A retired government employee, he was very kind to me as was his wife, and he gave me many hours of paid work around his yard, his gardens, cleaning his gutters,

etc. I never learned his or her first names and to my knowledge they had no children. When I finally graduated from high school, he and his wife provided me with a gracious graduation gift: $20! I don't think he knew my parents at all. As a senior I obtained a job at the Roth's Americana Theater, down the street from AHS, and I was an usher. Several other fellow students were also ushers and classmate Rick LeCompte was an "assistant manager." Ushers were paid $1/hour and we were required, on shifts, to stand inside the theatre with a flashlight throughout the films. So, we would see features twenty and thirty times over. To amuse ourselves we would quietly recite lines sometimes from the back, a line ahead of its play in the movie. Films I became intimately acquainted with included *A Man for All Seasons, Oliver* (which I hated), *The Good, the Bad & the Ugly* (which I loved), *Z* (a political movie that I didn't understand at all—it didn't matter *how* many times I had to watch it!), *The Lion in Winter, Paint Your Wagon*, and many others. The high school aged staff got into all kinds of mischief around the theater. Guys were ushers and projectionists, and girls staffed the refreshment stand and the ticket booth. I "dated" two of these… (is that even a word anymore?)

In recent years I have enjoyed becoming reacquainted with another AHS classmate, Patrick Castellucci, although we were not close friends during high school. But in recent years we have enjoyed a rejuvenated friendship, and we have enjoyed sharing our life's stories and those of mutual friends from our youth. Crafting a new friendship with my AHS '70 classmate has been a great blessing in my life in recent times.

While home on college break, I often worked local construction jobs. They paid $2.75 to $3.00 an hour! Area construction jobs which I worked on included:

- Arlington Asphalt, summer 1971
    - Widening and fresh paving of Columbia Pike, with surveyor Jim Dobie. I was a surveyors' assistant, which meant I held the pole while Mr. Dobie manned the transit. He was kind to me, and I worked that whole summer with him (except when I was re-taking a chemistry course at George Mason). I worked just down from my parents' home. Mr. Dobie pulled me out of the way at the last minute one afternoon or I would have lost a leg to an approaching road grader. "Keep your eyes open, son." Another red neck laborer named "Joe" stuck a wad of chewing tobacco in my mouth one morning. Made me sick all day!
- Mount Vernon Masonry, winter 1971
    - 

The Richard Byrd Library (Springfield), near to the very site of original Ravensworth mansion (which I only learned later). I only worked a week on this job, toting brick and block with brick-tongs up two and three levels of scaffolding on the new library. It was the hardest physical labor that I ever did. I teamed with good friend Jim Melancon, a new Virginia Tech freshman for that week of work. Jim was a better laborer than I was, and he was probably my favorite friend that year. Two days also, working on a new Shop addition to my own high school, Annandale High.
- Walt Robbins Inc., Christmas break, 1972

- Springfield commercial building project, a two-week job doing building construction labor on a new warehouse. Not a friendly foreman, as I remember. He didn't seem to like temporary college student workers. Told me temp help was not entitled to the Christmas baskets that were delivered to employees on Christmas Eve. Or he just didn't like me.

I am inclined to record very little of the ebb and flow of my dating experiences though they were very important, even all-consuming, at the time. Young men and women all of us, with what to my eye were only the most general ethics, and empowered with almost complete freedom (especially after we acquired a driver's license), little accountability, if any—I had none--no knowledge of what was actually going *on* in these intense relationships, I am amazed we did not get into more trouble. No one that I knew had received "the talk" from parents and if they had, they didn't speak of it. Whatever use "sex education" classes in school might have been (and I don't remember any at that time), would have seemed pretty useless. But the overall climate, as generally unrestrained as it was, was nothing compared to what it would become in ten, twenty and more years later. I wonder how "*then*" we would have processed the words "purity", "abstinence" and "abortion."

For movies, other than what you might catch on television, there was the Annandale Theater, our Roth's Americana, the Jefferson Theater in Falls Church, the Arlington Theater, and the Bradlick Theater. That's all I remember that there were in which to see a movie. I suppose that if you could figure how to get into D.C. there were many more options. One Saturday morning in my sophomore year (spring 1968; just before I think, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. occurred, when the "District" exploded) our wonderful biology teacher, Mrs. Peggy

Jarman (also our Class of 1970 sponsor) arranged an off-the-radar trip into the District, to view together the new film, *2001: A Space Odyssey.* It was a highlight of our whole high school experience for those of us who attended. Mrs. Jarman rocketed up the charts in our minds. At that time, she was 27. It was a County school bus which we rode and we had an incredible time. Peggy told us as an honored guest at our high school class 40th reunion at Chantilly in 2010 that she very nearly lost her job for that Saturday "field trip!" We loved her all the more. She took us, with her husdand along who we thought was pretty cool, to Virginia Beach for a "coastal field trip." I remember her teaching us how to "pith" (paralyze) frogs before we dissected them, and her not enjoying the procedure. Sadly, she died in 2016 of heart failure at 75. A graduate of James Madison University, her obituary reads, "Midway through life, she evolved into a fierce advocate for women's rights, abortion rights as an executive for Planned Parenthood in Kansas and was a proud advocate for the cause of the LGBTQ+ community."

My "tales of the neighborhood" do not include stories of drinking. I did not drink and never have but my abstinence has not been for religious reasons. Both my parents struggled with alcoholism with many attendant symptoms, which most of my friends witnessed. And so, though many high school classmates made a great practice of acquiring beer, Boone's Farm wine (I remember), and telling tales of getting older people to buy liquor for them at Dixie Liquors across the Key Bridge in Georgetown, I had no desire to go down that road.

"Grass" as we called marijuana in those trippy days of 1967 and on, was another matter. My neighborhood friend Blair showed me "grass" for the first time. (Sadly, he died of a heart defect while I was still in college, 1973 I think). Most of my theater friends smoked too—even the "squeakiest clean" among them--and they still got good grades. Our parents knew little about it nor about acid, mescaline, PCP or other drugs. So, I could easily have gotten

into it too, but did not while in Annandale. Later, in college and 250 miles away, well that was another story, for a short season.

There were virtually no blacks, Asian people or Hispanic people in our neighborhoods or other ethnic minorities that I remember. When D.C. erupted in 1968 when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, we were given close to a week off from school. We were warned that inner city gangs were threatening to come out into the suburbs to exact vengeance. We could hardly imagine it happening and it did not—although my father was threatened in his office in Building T-7, next to National Airport. But we, the Annandale teenagers, were growing up. And it was the late nineteen sixties.

I never knew where any of our junior high school (at that time called an Intermediate School) or high school teachers lived (except Mrs. Covell mentioned before and my freshman year Algebra 1 teacher Colonel Boleyn who lived on Rose Lane and I never went anywhere near his house!) And my senior year English teacher, Bernice London had a few of us on a Saturday to her home in Reston—very cool and contemporary. Her husband, (Barry, I remember) was a "podiatrist", my first encounter with that word. We were just never told, in general, where our teachers lived so I never knew if they lived near us or not. But I must say that I had several really great teachers and four, actually, for more than one year each (not because I failed their classes!) For multiple years, I had as teachers:

- Miss Patricia Opp (Algebra II and Trig/Analytic Geometry junior and senior years). She was patient with me and I remember her saying, "Neil, you're going to do something with math—you might become an engineer."
- Mr. Paul Douglas for both junior and senior years, a two-year first-time experimental alternative to the traditional History/Government of the third and fourth years of high school. The experiment was

called *U.S. Studies* and it was great to have this same wonderful educator for two years.
- Miss Barbara Aspinall for Junior English and then as a senior, another experimental elective called *Creative Writing*. She was also a fabulous teacher.
- Mr. Paul O. Schwartz, for sophomore through senior years in Mechanical Drawing, Engineering Drawing and then *Aircraft Drawing*. Mr. Schwartz and shop teacher Frank Beto saw me working on the new AHS Shop addition over Christmas break (1970), and came out to ask me if I had already flunked out of college? I told them no, not yet, but I was working construction over Christmas break! I remember they laughed and patted me on the back. It was the last I saw either of those fine teachers. Recently classmate Patrick Castellucci—with whom I am enjoying a wonderful friendship now, related to me that he was also a student of Mr. Schwartz—said to me, "Neil you were his boy," which I cannot imagine to have been true. It made me feel good though. I miss the man even now. (I would also take yet another year of mechanical drawing in my freshman year at Virginia Tech.)

For music in northern Virginia there were the local AM pop music stations. FM stations were cooler and especially WMOD—where I learned the weirdness of *The Firesign Theater* and *SSX*, the "subterranean sound experiment." There was also WHFS—and the beloved DJ Frank Richards. These stations featured "underground" music shows with "progressive rock." For

records there was Giant Music, Orpheus Records in Georgetown, the local Drug Fair for 45 rpm records and E.J. Korvette near Bailey's Crossroads where I bought the new Beatles' double "White Album" (simply titled "The Beatles") on the first Saturday it was available—in November 1968, I remember. I think it was ten dollars, which my mother thought was an exorbitant amount! My friend Jeff borrowed it that very afternoon and taped it! We sometimes traded albums and sometimes recorded each other's albums on reel-to-reel tape recorders. (Cassette recording was still two years in the future). My parents gave me a small *Craig* reel-to-reel recorder for Christmas in 1968. I recorded a few selections off various albums and carried the recorder around with me in the neighborhood. I remember recording *Truth* by the Jeff Beck Group and Creedence Clearwater Revival's first album. I also bought, for ten dollars from Paul Sloan, up the street, what seemed to me to be an ancient 1950's Webcor tube-driven Model 210-1B Reel To Reel Tape Recorder:

Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. But I loved making recordings of many songs on reels, transferring them to smaller reels for the portable recorder I carried around the neighborhood long before "boom boxes" became popular. I later sold it in college for the same price: $10.

Somehow thinking about the music of my youth, reminds me of **The Burling Tract** story—probably because I loved Neil Young, the Buffalo Springfield, the Steve Miller Band and Judy Collins at that time and would play their songs in the car with my Craig recorder--the days before tape players in cars. Not that

they connect specifically to The Burling Tract; but I remember listening to those artists in the days when I was driving out to the Tract. Music is funny that way. Mr. Douglas, for some reason, invited a few of us in the spring of our junior year in U.S. Studies, to get involved with the preservation effort for the 400-acre piece of land bordered by the Beltway, Old Georgetown Pike, Scott's Run brook and the Potomac River itself. In an almost forgotten story now, many citizens aided by many high school new environmentalists, rose up to seek preservation of the beautiful piece of land from development in 1969 and '70. We succeeded and today most of the tract is intact, and is now a 330-acre park called the Scott's Run Nature Preserve. As a very young man, it was my two-year, personal foray into the new cause of environmentalism.

It is a long and complicated story, beyond the scope of this writing, but it was foundational for me. I became involved with something that made a difference, a community team project connecting senior citizens, couples, sympathetic government officials and high school students, and I threw myself into it. (Strangely, I don't remember any college students being involved).

The Burling Tract

My parents were passively supportive, allowed me to borrow the one family car to drive there. I took friends there: Barbara Rose, Rick LeCompte, Bob Daugherty and I think Linda Rasmussen, and showed them the woods, the hills, the cliffs, the site of Mr. Burling's cabin and the scratch-built, spring-fed swimming pool and the gorgeous Scott's Run waterfall—right within sight almost, of the District of Columbia. I spent hours and hours there, sometimes alone. Subsequently, a 200-page paper was written (by a Sharon Francis)[6], telling the whole history and story. My Dad went to the Fairfax Library in about 1977 and photocopied it for me, sent it to me and complained (in a good-humored way) to "please don't assign me a project in the future where I can't at least have a smoke break."). I still have the paper.

Edward B. Burling (1870-1966) co-founded the prominent law firm of Covington & Burling in 1919 in D.C. He died at 96, three years before my involvement with his pastoral tract. He used to go out there by himself to relax. Today, the chimney of his cabin is still there. I remember the first community meeting I attended, in a small, old house on Old Georgetown Pike at the southwest corner of the tract, owned by an older lady named Mrs. Elizabeth Miles "Betty" Cooke (1908-1999), adjacent to the Swink's Mill. The acreage, then known as the Burling Tract, became the Scott's Run Nature Preserve after money was raised to buyout the developer in 1970. The Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Walter J. Hickel, pledged 50% of the purchase price from his contingency fund. The rest was raised by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Fairfax Park Authority, and individuals.

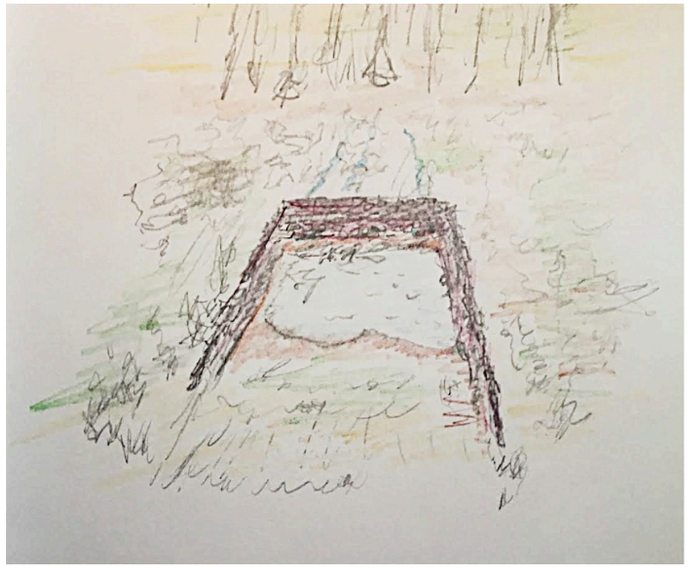
This is Swink's Mill today, and the SW corner of the Tract is across the road…

I remember Mrs. Cooke was very gracious to me, loved the attraction that the "cause" brought to area high school students and welcomed me into her home a number of times. She applauded when I, and a few other high school students, spoke (3 minutes each) at the Fairfax County Park Authority public meeting on the issue. So did Mr. Douglas. One of the most educational experiences of my whole youth. After beginning college at Virginia Tech (summer 1971), one more time, I attended a gathering on the Burling Tract at which the speaker was just-retired Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, whose hand I shook. I was introduced by Mrs. Cooke. I was touching on a far deeper history, as follows:

> Scott's Run was a stream for a potential mill site. Pearson Alexander Scott of Westmoreland County had been given, in 1716, nine hundred and fifty acres of land that was between what we now call the "Lewinsville Road and Tyson Corner". Just before the present bridge over Scott Run on road 193 was the location of Ball's Mill. The millrace was on the right-hand side. This land was part of the Turberville land grant. In 1799 John Turberville left one-third of the proceeds from the mills on Scotts Run to his wife. The mill ground corn up to the time of the Civil War. At this time, the Ball's abandoned the mill.

The Ball's heir divided the property. In 1877 William Waring Ball sold the land at the corner of Georgetown Pike (route 193) to James Welsh. James built a mill. Wheat, rye and corn were ground at the mill. The mill was a two and a half story frame structure with a gable roof. A shed was added to one end. The water wheel was in the rear of the building on the up-stream side of the mill. In 1891 the millrace was extended. An aqueduct was built to carry the water across the road to the water wheel. The aqueduct leaked a bit and this greatly annoyed the neighbors who had to use the road. At this time, the mill was known as the Welsh Mill. The miller's house, which was a wooden saltbox structure, was across the road from the mill. The house was built around 1878. An addition was added to the house and this served as a country store. The McGarity family became owners of the mill. Thus, the mill was known as the Albert McGarity Mill. In 1892, Edward Franklin Swink, from Schwinksville, Pa., became the owner and operator of the mill. The Swink family had built, in 1880, "Spring Hill", a beautiful old house. The story goes that Colonel John Mosby was hidden in the attic of Spring Hill. Mosby certainly was in this area during the Civil War and was harassing the "Yankees".[7]

Mr. Burling had dug and constructed a primitive swimming pool, that I remember was still there when I was there. I would love to have been able to hear him tell that story. It was a shallow pool, stone and brick floor, fed by a spring flowing into it. It was falling apart by 1969 (he had died in 1966). Here is a sketch I drew recently, from memory:



Going back to Annandale, for some reason I still often think of the "kids" of my neighborhood. I liked many but not all. One kid was snooty, a serious intellect and annoyed me. Concversely, a one-time good friend of mine in high school and after, has refused communication from me (and from others of our class.) I guess I annoyed him at some point! He is a clinical psychologist and I cannot imagine why he would so completely severe any ties with us--a mystery to me. Probably in reality they are both perfectly lovely gentlemen…

Three fellows with whom I have enjoyed the occasional reunion of friendship have been Steve Houseworth, George Oliver and Kerry Parker. While we were still in the 8th grade both George and Kerry worked with me in the Poe school gym after school on getting physically fit in anticipation of the coming freshman football season! All three of these AHS '70 men attended and graduated from the USMA at West Point, and made careers in the U.S. Army. Of the three, I have enjoyed the closest contact with Steve, an orthopedic surgeon. He even lived and practiced n New Bedford for a while where Renée and I lived.

An almost lifelong neighbor friend in Annandale was Rick

LeCompte. He lived "across" Columbia Pike and was with me in some elementary classrooms, all through Poe Intermediate and all through AHS. He is still a Facebook friend. Rick was making little movies even when young and especially in high school, plus providing vocals for a couple of our high school rock and roll bands. He has made his career as a successful film editor on feature films. The last time I saw him was at Bailey's Crossroads in 1973 with our mutual friend, Basil who at that time was "Tom." Basil grew up and lived on Hummer Road and was one of my closer friends. He was driving before I was and he would pick me up and we would drive to Landmark Mall—only because of the cool bookstore there. Basil and Rick were situated among the more hippy-configured and the outlier intellectual stratum of our high school class (I fancied myself marginally part of this group too, in contrast to the more scholastically entitled and school-approved *valedictorian* types). Rick was an assistant manager too, at Roth's Americana Theater and so I "worked for him" although it never felt like a boss-employee relationship. I remember Rick also, for being one of our classmates who actually drove to New York and attended Woodstock in August 1969. I remember that he drove a green Chevy Nova.

Other neighborhood friends included Linda, five doors up from me and we shared 5th and 6th grade classrooms and she was always kind to me through high school. Linda was my first "date"--we attended together the Annandale School Fair in the sixth grade. Her Dad was "chauffeur." As a senior in high school, I so loathed the afore-mentioned *valedictorian* intelligentsia of our school that during creative writing class I would often drag my desk out into the hall as a less-than veiled protest—and our good-humored Miss Aspinall accommodated this practice although I learned I looked like a complete dork doing so. Linda would come out occasionally and sit with me—she was just that nice. In recent years I learned that she also had lived for many years in Massachusetts, and I had coffee with her in Providence, Rhode Island, which she courteously prefaced with a call to Renée. She

has two lovely daughters as do Renée and I. Post note: As a college freshman, I was home for a weekend and attended a Friday night AHS football game. I sat with Miss Finch and Mr. Henretti, both beloved AHS teachers and maybe, sort of "dating" at that time. Miss Finch remembered my self-exiling stunt from Miss Aspinall's class. I distinctly remember that she laughed and said, "You were such a goddam individual, Neil" and laughed again. I guess it was the *schtick* I wanted to project then.

Also, there was Beth who lived a couple of streets over. She was a cheerleader and although she and I also shared fifth and sixth grades together and then all the way through high school, our paths did not cross much until recent years via Facebook. Beth is also one of a number of Facebook friends from much earlier years of acquaintance, whom I have discovered is a person of faith. I have a fun memory of Beth and her friend Patsy Bray (from Rose Lane), from spring 1964 when we were all in the sixth grade. She and Patsy had attended what I thought (for fifty years) was the D.C. Beatles concert. They wore a white glove on one hand for a week or so after the concert and Mrs. Covell sanctioned this gesture. Only fairly recently did Beth correct my long-held myth. It wasn't the Beatles. It was the Dave Clark Five!

On Beth's street also lived Glenn Tomkinson. Other than Jeff, Glenn was my closest friend. We did so much together—listening to records and playing guitars and playing baseball with Jeff, playing APBA football, Avalon Hill board games (which took days), walking all over town and continually exegeting the mysteries of the opposite sex! Glenn is now remembered by few. He died in Fredericksburg, Virginia in 2007 at 54 years old. He wrote his life's story in a 40-page paper which he had sent to me before he passed away (posted on my website). It is fascinating and interestingly, with perfect spelling and punctuation—a fruit of public education in those days! It is an amazingly sad story. He followed me by one year to Virginia Tech and there began to smoke "grass," subsequently forfeiting his academic eligibility.

His girlfriend was Diane Hauser, a 1970 classmate of ours but she died, sadly in those times. Glenn loved "weed" so much that it became mostly all he did for pleasure; plus playing chess, at which he became quite accomplished. He was married briefly, had a son named Barney, but then moved from disappointing location to location, all over the country. His parents stood by him and supported him when needed, but Glenn finally died pretty much in squalor. I am permanently sad for his plight. Even when we were both still young, I attempted to talk to Glenn about Christ—not in a preachy way but simply as a good focus in life. He rejected it, I remember, because he imagined that he would have to give up weed--although I never made this any kind of requirement of faith. Glenn had a sister too, Cindy, who was in my high school class, but I did not know her well.

There were also the Oliver brothers, twins, Reggie and Rodney. Reggie is a Facebook friend today. Their cousin, Cathy, was a star of sorts. She danced and appeared on television once on the *Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour*! She has attended our AHS class reunions, but I have not spoken to her. I have not heard what became of Rodney. In relation to Annandale, apparently "Farmer's Hill" was owned by the Oliver family. Many of us loved sledding down that hill in the winter. You had to turn a sharp right at the bottom or you would go right into the creek! At night the hill, covered with snow and ice—perfect night-sledding conditions—would have a few rocks jutting out. If your sled's runners struck those rocks while flying down the hill, sparks would fly. Sledders could be seen streets away but the spark-flashes! I also got beat up once at the bottom, when I became incensed at a bully who was knocking girls off their sleds. He beat me to a pulp, the last time I ever got beat up. One other Farmer's Hill memory: after one night sledding session, I was walking home in the dark. I was accosted by a group of bullies and demanded whatever valuables I had on me, which was none. Just then Mike and Macon Harper, older and twin classmates I knew from football as well as the wrestling team walked up behind me. They were wearing their AHS letter

jackets and at that time, AHS was pretty much Camelot in our neighborhood. They warned the bullies to scram lest they regret it. Mike looked at me and said, "get outta here, kid." I was grateful to know a few older good guys, watching out for the likes of me! Not many years hence one of the Harper brothers died—I don't know which one--I heard, drowned in the Great Salt Lake in Utah —made me sad. Today the creek is gone, the barn is gone and the hill is gone. The Latter Day Saints bought the property and developed it.

From my earliest recollection, before the coming of the supermalls (Tyson's Corner, Landmark, Springfield Mall, Fair Oaks) there was the very cool Seven Corner's Shopping Center which opened in 1956 at the inter-section of U.S. Route 50 and Virginia Route 7 in Falls Church. It had been the site during

the Civil War of the Union fort, Fort Buffalo. The Center was "anchored" (as is said now) by department stores Julius Garfinckel & Co. (bankruptcy in 1990) on one end and by Woodward & Lothrup (closed in 1995), on the other end. Both of these were favorites of my mother from her war-time years in the early 1940s when she lived in D.C. I remember the distinct department store smells of each, and I remember thinking it curious that the shopping bags Mom would occasionally bring home from Seven Corners smelled like the stores themselves. Every year she would purchase a special Christmas candle at one or the other of these stores.

There was also an S&W Cafeteria in Seven Corners (also magical to my mom's memories from D.C.) and a Brentano's Book Store there. Which I loved. And a Hahn's shoe store, which I hated. Seven Corners was razed sometime in the mid 1990s, having fallen on hard times. It was where I first learned about escalators and walking from store to store in a planned way. The stores had outside entrances, linked by a protective and tastefully designed breezeway roofing structure. Tyson's and Landmark (1965 – 2017, where Renée and I purchased our first couch and chair at Sears when we were married, and where I loved the Walden Bookstore) would follow, and others later. But none had quite the 1950s *newness* and positivity that Seven Corners seemed to radiate!

The northern Virginia S&W story is of interest to me, because I was regularly taken there and because it harkened back to a simpler time. **S&W Cafeteria** was a Charlotte, North Carolina-based chain of cafeteria-style restaurants. The chain specialized in low-cost, Southern-style food. Branches were located in the Southeastern United States from Washington, D.C. to Atlanta, Georgia. The *Wikipedia* article gives:

> The first Washington, D.C area location opened downtown in 1934; a 27,000-square-foot (2,500 m^2) restaurant in the Washington Building, 1425 G Street, NW at New York Avenue. It was a regular stop for southern congressman, including Sen. Richard Russell (D-GA) and Sen. Clyde Hoey (D-NC). During World War II, the cafeteria served up to 9,000 daily. Because of a severe drop in night trade, it closed in May 1964. Suburban locations operated at Seven Corners Shopping Center, opening in 1956; Landmark Shopping Center, opening in 1964; and a 215,000-square-foot (20,000 m^2) restaurant at Washington Science Center in Rockville, Maryland, opening in 1966. A racial ban at the Seven Corners location was lifted in August 1961, after an African official (the mayor of Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika) was refused service and the State Department intervened with a call to S&W owner Frank Sherrill. This location closed in 1976, when the center upgraded. Its closing spurred protests from longtime patrons, largely elderly, 1,000 of whom relied daily on the cafeteria for low-cost meals. The location reopened in 1980, at 155 Hillwood Ave., in nearby Falls Church; a new $650,000, 13,000-square-foot (1,200 m^2) restaurant seating 400. The Falls Church location operated into the 1990s. The Landmark location featured 30-foot (9.1 m) long, 22-foot (6.7 m) high murals and crystal chandeliers, closed in 1986. The downtown Asheville location opened at 60 Patton Avenue in 1929, and closed in 1974. It is in the Art Deco style and was designed by architect Douglas Ellington. In 2007, Steve Moberg purchased and renovated the building and the restaurant S&W Steak and Wine and coffee shop Corner House. The restaurant closed in 2011. It had been added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

Accidentally discovering the closed Asheville store in 2014 was a wonderful surprise, as both Renée and I appreciate the *Art Deco* architectural style…

For official amusements there was the one-time appearance to which my parents took me, of the Clyde Beatty & Cole Brothers Circus. There was also an annual appearance right in Annandale of what we just knew as "the carnival" which had rides such as the *Roundup*, the *Scrambler,* the *Loop-A-Plane*, the *Tilt-a-Whirl* and a Ferris wheel and merry-go-round. There were also game booths and many fun eateries—freshly spun-up cotton candy being a universal favorite. I remember the neon lights of the rides at night! There was also Little League baseball, the pony ride at Bailey's Crossroads[8] and the area swimming pools. There were three of these, that I was aware of: Annandale Recreation Center, Sleepy Hollow Recreation and the one which my parents joined, the *Sleepy Hollow Bath & Racquet Club* which is still there and like Seven Corners, opened first in 1956. It had two pools, tennis courts and a 9-hole par 3 golf course and my parents first joined in about 1962. I learned to swim there, swam on the summer swim team and took private breast-stroke lessons (I can't remember why) from a Mr. Winkler. I had another connection to that same Holmes Run brook community- I attended the Mary Dale School, quite close to the "Club" for the first grade (1958-'59). It was run by a Mrs. Bolding and since I was too young to enter Annandale

Elementary yet, my parents wanted me to begin school—thus Mary Dale which was in Mrs. Bolding's home up the hill from the Club at the end, either on George's Lane or Highview.

Holmes Run flowed into Lake Barcroft (constructed 1913-1915), whose dam was on Columbia Pike and through which Holmes Run continued meandering and empties into the Potomac in Alexandria. Its headwaters are now under the Beltway near Tyson's Corner. An old stream with Civil War mention, I had read that there were the remains of the Barcroft Mill during my childhood. I asked my father to take me exploring there, which he did and in fact we found foundation stones and the remnant of a millrace in those days. This short history is interesting:

> Barcroft Community was named in memory of a doctor who built his home here and also operated a mill. The man was Dr. John W. Barcroft, originally from New Jersey. In 1849 Dr. Barcroft came to our area and built both a home and a mill on Columbia Pike at Holmes Run near the present dam. He practiced medicine throughout the surrounding community and ran his mill up to the time of the Civil War. During its retreat from the Battle of Bull Run, the Union Army overran Dr. Barcroft's home. His property was so damaged that he went back North until the end of the war. He then returned to Fairfax County and built a new home on what became known as Barcroft Hill. Before the time of Dr. Barcroft, our neighborhood was not without some notable history. The original residents were the Doe and Necostin Indians of the Algonquin tribes. (Anacostia derives its name from the Necostins.) Artifacts of these early natives are still occasionally found. Howard Uphoff has uncovered arrowheads on his land at 6308 Lakeview Drive. Munson Hill Farm was a large tract between what is now Bailey's Crossroads and Seven Corners. It was settled and developed during the early 1700's. Timothy Munson bought the land in 1851 and gave his name to the farm. In the time to come his name was also applied to a community and a street just north of our lake area. Columbia Pike was constructed as a toll road in 1808, and was then called the Washington Gravelled Road.[9]

Such heritage throughout Fairfax County and Annandale enchanted me from my earliest years. My father fed my interest, as said, with select tales of northern Virginia. At his return from the War in the late fall of 1945, he began to work as a civilian engineer in Research and Development for the Engineer Center at Fort Belvoir. My parents were married at Luther Memorial Church in D.C. June 29th 1946 and then lived in Alexandria until they purchased 933 Ridge Road in the new Columbia Pines in 1950. He and my mother lived there from their marriage in 1946 in northern Virginia until they relocated to Florida in 1990. They actually loved northern Virginia, neither deriving from there at all.

Two other random places to which they took me pop up in my memory: in neither case were the occasions significant, just the places themselves which each figured into the national "story" at one time or another in earlier history: the Mayflower Hotel on Connecticut Avenue in Washington (begun in 1922) and its Rib Room restaurant at which J. Edgar Hoover had lunch eveery day until his death in 1972 (he was not pointed out to me though on my visit there), and Dumbarton Oaks in Georgetown where the 1944 conference occurred at which the United Nations was orginally planned (and English occupation of which stretched back to 1702).

As a couple they loved exploring all the little historical sites and details of Annandale itself, selective as to what interested them but loving the town. But as Annandale became so busy and demographically diverse after the fall of Vietnam in 1975, they decided to pursue another dream of my father's. He had lived in St. Petersburg, Florida as a boy for eighteen months in 1926 and '27. He had always dreamed of returning there, which they did—my mother accommodating his dream—and he lived his final four years there. After his death in 1994, she continued on there and then died herself in 1997, largely alone. I have told their story in the book *Defiance at Cairo* which I published in 2020.

My parents' religion was centered on Dad's understanding of Lutheranism, into which my mother found refuge (after a very strict Churches of Christ upbringing in middle Tennessee) and into which I was enfolded and raised too. When their church, Hope Lutheran Church began in Annandale it first met in the mid '50s in the Grange Hall on Annandale Road. I remember asking my dad what "Grange" met but I don't remember his answer but I remember the building well. A drive down Annandale Road now on Google Maps "street view" reveals no remnant. Our first pastor was Rev. John Schramm.

In about 1960 the church built a new modern church (still with Pastor Schramm) on Ravensworth Road, very near the new Annandale High School. It was directly across the road from St. Michael's Catholic Church, also with a new modernistic sanctuary. Hope Lutheran was home for me and a good number of classmates as we traversed intermediate school (junior high) and then into high school. In 1966 to '67, Wednesdays were exhaustingly busy—after wrestling practice after school, freshman year, a few of us walked over to Hope Lutheran for a parent-cooked spaghetti dinner and then the final year of catechism classes. Then the mile-walk to Boy Scout Troop #674 night at Annandale Elementary and then another half mile walk home, hauling my smelly wrestling attire in my AHS gym bag—and there was still often homework to complete. I was beat! AHS classmates part of this Wednesday night routine included Scott and Dan Stolldorf (a year younger), Libby Stringer, Jackie Collins and Steve Teichler. I do not know any of their life details or where they are. The pastor who drilled us in *Luther's Catechism* and confirmed us in the spring of 1967 was Dr. Harold J. Uhl, whom I found retired in Roanoke Virginia in 2010 and he welcomed me for a nice lunch, remembering me well, he said. Dr. Uhl, 87, died in 2019. Here is a good picture of Pastor Uhl:

After confirmation I don't remember returning to Hope Lutheran much—football, wrestling, rock and roll and girls were far more of an inducement. Other friends of course moved through St. Michael's, Annandale Methodist, St. Alban's Episcopal but religion was just not a thing that many 1960's northern Virginia students talked much about, as I remember. AHS had a *Young Life* Club, but again, that was for the straighter kids as I perceived it. Plus, I was never invited to attend.

It is curious to me that with such a bland spiritual landscape, I should be so spiriutally hungry later and end up experiencing a dramatic conversion to faith (in 1972) and then making my way into ministry professionally (1979). Along the way and in recent years I have found myself in company of a good number of AHS and Virginia Tech classmates who were also drawn into a vibrant spiritual faith in Christ, and fully satisified now with a biblical world-view and theology. Others, and perhaps a majority, are darker about any orthodoxy of faith and prefer the *en vogue* current category of "nones."

My sense of "my neighborhood" was bounded by the Potomac River to the north, Fairfax to the west, Great Falls to the northwest and Springfield to the south. After, I would make my place in Falls Church with Renée for a couple of years, then to Roanoke City for another couple of years, then to north Dallas, Texas for four years, then to Southcoast, Massachusetts for 36 years and now back in Roanoke

City. My wife Renée fondly remembers the locales of *her* youth and adulthood (her father was a U.S. Navy pilot and Reserve Training Center C.O.): Renée was born at Bethesda Naval Hospital and lived in Miami, Patuxent River in Maryland, Argentia in Newfoundland, Warminster, Pennsylvania, Sioux City, Iowa, Cave Spring-Roanoke, Virginia Tech, Falls Church, Dallas and Massachusetts. And now full-circle back to Roanoke.

I have visited 11 foreign countries and sampled their living for short periods, the longest—seven weeks across the *Camino de Santiago* in northern Spain. Each has its distinct charm and its local "homies." But my fondness for my own home "neighborhood" continues. Interestingly, my *actual* neighborhood of Columbia Pines is largely unchanged despite the great changes in the town of Annandale. All of the original nine "models" remain there. One of the original "custom" homes on Ridge Road is long gone—that of U.S. Navy Captain Si Whited (a single son, Craig, older than me.) That single lot (which I mowed several times) is now two lots with a $1.1 million, 4,500 ft^2 home and another $1.3 million 3,800 ft^2 home. I wonder what the old Navy pilot would think? Interestingly my own home at 4003 Ridge Road is now marked on Google Maps as paired with a business, "the Society for Chemical Hazard."

In Columbia Pines today, the same 1940s streets remain. The trees are taller but the neighborhood sounds and smells are unchanged. The three water towers are long gone. The residents are very demographically diverse now and to my awareness at least, few if any military families live there—real estate is far too expensive now. When I walk occasionally through the neighborhood now, it echoes my youth. Each section of street brings back fond memories of earlier residents and friends, lawns I mowed, driveways I shoveled, my buddies' homes, girlfriend's homes, front yards in which I played, terrors and joys both. And Groove Park at the end of Murray Lane, the Russo's front yard, the Sexton's brick wall, and other places I sat and wondered about my future. It makes me glad that at least Columbia Pines remains.

Time will fail me if I branch out this story and stretch the "shadows of Ravensworth" past Fairfax City! But one other *regional* site is of a great and historical interest to me still, which exists four miles west of Middleburg, Virginia, 46 miles due west of my home in Annandale. There, President John F. Kennedy and his first lady, Jacqueline ("Jackie"), built a modern home, to serve as a weekend retreat. The First Lady actually designed and outfitted the home herself with all the furnishings. "The house may not be perfectly proportioned, but it has everything," the first lady wrote in brief notes about the house she would eventually call Wexford, after the Irish county from which the president's family immigrated in the mid-19th century. "All the places we need to get away from each other. So husband can have meetings. Children watch TV. Wife paint or work at desk. Nurse have own room. Help a place to sit. All things so much bigger houses don't have. I think it's brilliant!"[10]

Now, only daughter Caroline survives of this family. She was recently appointed United States ambassador to Australia.

As providence would have it, the Kennedys only "weekended" there three times, in 1962 and early 1963 and then in October 1963. Jackie sold it a year after the assassination. There are brief 8 mm film clips on the JFK website. of the first family arriving on Marine One (before it was called as such and was an Army helicopter) and then relaxing there. It was called Atoka.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Many people have no or minimal warm feelings or sense of deep history for their home town. But some of us do. For some reason, into my seventh decade, I still feel a hunger to know more about Annandale and Fairfax County. I feel like I have only begun to learn.

But noting that we lived for thirty-six years (half of my life) in another area that is older even (from an English colonial reckoning) than Plantation Ravensworth and its locale, I reflect too that we lived in New Bedford, Massachusetts for so many years. Wampanoag native Americans, Pequots, Narragansetts, etc. lived there from before time began to be recorded by white men. Then in 1620 the English colonizers showed up and founded Plymouth. Miles Standish and Edward Winslow famously negotiated with the Wampanoag sachem Massasoit for the purchase by the English of Dartmouth, where my church was and is. The English were amused to close a deal for such a large tract of land so cheaply (the bill of sale listed a few farm implements and so forth--all that the Pilgrims had was brought from England). But Massasoit was amused that the English could be so foolish as to think that land can actually be "owned" by someone and the English handed him, what was from his perspective, a large pile of free, cool stuff!

We met many people in New England who loved *their* home towns too, and more than a few who were born there will probably die there. New Bedford and Dartmouth and that whole region has a fascinating history just as does Fairfax County. New Bedford was next door to the home of the Mayflower Pilgrims. New Bedford, the "Whaling City", was once the largest whaling port in the world. Then it became a large textile center. And its culture of English, Portuguese, Irish, Cape Verdean, and many other ethnic groups makes it very different from the Annandale in which I grew up. Beautful old houses are still there!

As to old houses, our little home on Willow Street was constructed in 1879, a farmhouse built by a man named George Pickens and the first one built in that part of what was a quickly expanding New Bedford. So, while not as old as Ravensworth or Ossian Hall or Oak Hill, 48 Willow Street is still there and has a long history of residents.

Also, as to old houses, Renée especially—and I also—developed

a love for the amazing *historic* homes that still stand in New Bedford, many more than do in Fairfax County now. We joined many historic homes walking-tours and enjoyed learning the history.

We also lived in Dallas, Texas for four years, just long enough to come to appreciate a little of the mid-Texan culture—where as it turns out, I had many relatives in the 1800s. And our first daughter, Jocelyn, was born in Dallas at Baylor Medical Center and is a true Texan!

One grows up where he grows up. He or she has no choice in the matter. As noted in this book, many of the families around me in Columbia Pines were there for three years and then moved on to new military assignments. My parents loved Annandale though and were making their home in Annandale long before I was born. They were happy there. They assumed that I would find the community adequate for all the things that mid-20th century life could offer. I did. I was blessed in many ways: friends, parents remaining faithful to each other, many good experiences as I hope this book illustrates, some measure of introduction to spiritual things, good schools, enough money, employment opportunities, general safety, and my own room on Ridge Road that was hard to leave in 1970.

Some experiences eluded me in my upbringing:

- I had no African-American friends, nor Asian-American (except David Omori), Hispanic, Native-American, European, South or Central American, only three Jewish friends that I know of, no one impoverished, no one incarcerated and no one politically employed (although Bill Russo rocketed to the top of Republican politics in North Carolina). Most of us had a monolithic, white, middle-class growing up.
- I was never arrested, never inside a courtroom or jail or police car, never attended a wedding or a funeral.

- I travelled only to visit family members in Wisconsin, Tennessee and occasionally to the beaches of the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Delaware. Thoughts of travelling overseas when I was young did not even occur to me or to any of my friends. I still have not visited Canada or Mexico, although I have travelled to the Bahamas, Haiti, England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, France, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, Israel, hiked across northern Spain for seven weeks and have visited 42 states thus far.
- There was no counseling offered, and no one seemed to cry out for it, from trauma—national or personal.
- If someone was gay or trans or other, we did not hear of it or speak of it. We were not afraid of it; we just didn't know about it.
- I lost few to death in my early years. I did not taste that kind of loss. Next door neighbor Blair Higgins, classmate and friend from 1966 to '68, died after I had gone off to college. My grandparents died in 1941,'60, '69 and '72 but not locally – I attended none of their funerals (though I eventually visited all of their gravesites). I saw my mother's parents for the last time at 14, in December 1966.
- In my upbringing I was never in an auto accident, did not take up smoking cigarettes, saw almost no pornography other than *Playboy* magazine, did not drink alcohol or smoke weed, and mostly managed to avoid getting mugged.
- I never rode a motorcycle or a jet ski, flew an airplane or learned to snow ski or water ski.
- I have never lived west of Dallas or in the deep south.
- I never attended Catholic mass, a Mormon ward, a Jewish synagogue or a Muslim mosque.

All of these "holes" in my experience balance my perspective a bit, for the wide range of experiences that I <u>*was*</u> given in Annandale,

in Fairfax County, among the acres of the Ravensworth plantation. From earliest days, I "felt" the history of my hometown. I wanted to know more. That fed into the excellent approach that the new "U.S. Studies" experiment at Annandale High School. Mr. Douglas wanted us to "experience" far more about history and current events (that would eventually become history) than simply to memorize facts and dates and names.

Living among the "shadows of Ravensworth" makes me proud of how providence has ordained my path and blessed me. I grew up well acquainted with the names of George and Martha Washington, Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, James Madison, Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, Mary Custis Lee, John S. Mosby, Martin Luther King Jr., Clara Barton and many others who are central to our country's story. Ravensworth, Ossian Hall and Oak Hill will one day be forgotten. But I hope the great experiment in American democracy, those mansions hearing discussed within their walls so often, will prosper and flourish and enjoy new adherents and patriots.

APPENDIX 1

George Sexton Sr. and His Sons

A Short Tale written first in September 2021

Ridge Road in Annandale, Virginia was termed "High Ridge" on a January 1862 map of the area from the Civil War. There were Union Army "entrenchments" marked on that map, perhaps a mile northeast of "High Ridge", and is one of the highest places of elevation in the whole Washington area. Ridge Road was one of two original streets in what was the newest and furthest out housing development from D.C. in the late post-war 1940s. The other was Rose Lane, presumably taken from "Rose Hill" on the same 1862 map. My own childhood home, with the others immediately adjacent, were the "models" of the new post- war neighborhood in" "Columbia Pines." My parents purchased the home in 1950. It was the smallest home in the collection of nine models (as I remember) and its marketing resulted in several others of the same design, built and purchased subsequently. Each "model" had its successors of the same design throughout the little neighborhood. Ours was numbered 933 Ridge Road (later renumbered to 4003). Next door was 935 Ridge Road, a slightly larger model, later renumbered to 4005. In my earliest memories of growing up, I was close to the Ricciardelli family (Army) in that home, then the Richert family (Air Force) after that, the Bradney family (Coast Guard) next and then in 1965, to the Sexton family. As with most of our neighborhood in those days, the men were military. This meant that every three years many families packed up and moved to their next post. My

Dad had served in the Army and then worked for the Army, but as a civilian and so we never moved. The Sextons moved to 4005 Ridge Road from Hagerstown, Maryland and dwelled in that house for many years. This family became part of my life through my high school years, and then into college.

George Sexton Sr., the father, had recently lost his wife to cancer. And the five sons lost their mother. As they moved into our neighborhood, next door to me—I was an only child—I immediately began to get to know our new neighbors. It was at the end of my eighth grade year.

The sons were George Jr., Jack, William, Jim and Dan. I have maintained and enjoyed communication with the younger two, Jim and Dan, in recent years. Jim offers this summary:

> My Dad, George Sexton Sr. grew up in a well-to-do family in a big house directly across from Wytheville Courthouse, in southwestern Virginia. His father had enjoyed a lucrative insurance business until a fire put him out of business. My father attended VPI&SU, majoring in aeronautical engineering—his brother, Earnest, was interested in aviation which may have motivated my father's choice of major. When the Second World War began my father was working in Buffalo, New York doing wing flutter testing in wind tunnels. The IBM company was contracted to send aeronautical data back to other designers in Tennessee and elsewhere. My mother worked for IBM and that is how she and my father met. They married in 1947 and the first of five sons arrived in 1948. By 1956, every two years, four more sons were born. George Jr. in 1948, Jack in 1950, William (Bill) in 1952, me—Jim—in 1954 and Dan in 1956. I am not sure how many companies my father worked for but he ended up with Fairchild in Hagerstown, Maryland. I remember that he worked on the tail section of the *Fokker* F27 commercial airliner (his last big aeronautical project that I knew of). Then he found himself laid off as industry-wide slowdowns took effect. At about the same

> time our mother endured a slow death from cancer and Dad depleted their savings in paying for our mother's treatments and we moved to the D.C. area to hopefully find better employment.
>
> He did find a new engineering job but then also explored the real estate business in the "boom years" of the 1970s. He obtained his broker's license and continued to sell real estate until retirement. We five sons all have found good lives and never caused Dad any trouble.

Mrs. Sexton was never spoken of in my presence in those years that I knew the Sextons. Jim remembers his Mom as "the brains of the family", an honors graduate of the University of Michigan. But I remember wondering what her story was, and how they felt about the loss? It must have been a dramatic change for the six of them to redefine their family dynamic and their lifestyle to a new community. While I don't remember any conversations about the woman that was their mom, somehow, I knew that these six men were dealing with it privately, each in his own way. They moved to a new town, a new home (for them) and a new life. They came to 4005 Ridge Road with two beagles, one cat and one goose. The dogs, male and female, were inseparable and were named Teddy and Susie. The cat was Blackie and the goose was Gleep-Gleep. Often, Teddy and Susie would leave the house together in the morning, gallop up the street, not to be seen again until late afternoon. Gleep-Gleep would fly out of the Sextons' back yard often and one day, built a nest up against the Damgaards' chimney —at two years old Gleep-gleep was relocated to Accotink Lake! The family animals were important to the six men.

The eldest son, George, was friendly to me and was an architecture student at VPI&SU. He was the one who talked to me about the school and the reason why I applied there, and was accepted in March of 1970. When I arrived there as a freshman that fall, George was a fifth-year senior. We would meet occasionally on or off campus, he was important to me. He later became a famous architect and founded a thriving business, George Sexton

Associates with offices in Washington D.C., New York, NY and Norwich, England. I have not had contact with him since our last chat at *Spudnuts* Doughnut shop in Blacksburg in the spring of 1971.

The second son, Jack, attended the University of Maryland and the University of Georgia and began a very successful career as a veterinarian. I never knew Jack well. He graduated from Annandale High School in 1968, hosting a legendary graduation party at their swimming pool, in their yard and in everyone else's yard. Cars were parked all over the neighborhood and eventually the party just had to be shut down. Nothing like it ever before in that community, and I am sure—nothing like it ever since.

The middle son, Bill, was my age and in my class at Annandale High School. He was hard to know, though, a quiet fellow who kept to himself. I have had no contact with Bill since high school.

The fourth son, Jim, was a close friend to me and we have stayed friends ever since. He graduated from Annandale High School in 1972 and went on to a full career with the Giant Food corporation. He still lives near Annandale, in Centerville. He enjoys helping his brother Jack with a large vineyard operation.

Fifth son, Dan, also attended VPI&SU, majoring in electrical engineering. He worked a full career with General Electric and lives today in New York. He has been blessed with a wonderful marriage and two lovely daughters, as am I. Our paths parallel in that way.

The Sexton family was important to me for several reasons.

Although it was never spoken of in my hearing, George Sexton Sr. always seemed so sad to me while always kind and friendly. He knew that my parents had a tempestuous and often violent relationship. He never actually said it, but he communicated warmly that I was always welcome in their television room—the side porch—to join them for watching football and movies. I often took them up on this warm offer. Mr. Sexton also encouraged my interest in aeronautical engineering, as did another neighborhood resident, Mr. Frank Russo, as mentioned. I remember Mr. Sexton recommending VPI&SU along with his son, George Jr., and lending me the university's catalog to peruse. (I graduated from VPI&SU, Virginia Tech in 1975 with a B.S. in Industrial Engineering and Operations Research). I owe my introduction to the school to the Sextons.

Jim and Dan were good friends to me when we were all young, too. Jim and I listened to countless rock and roll records, played APBA Football and baseball and Avalon Hill military games for endless hours. And of course, we talked about all the girls in the neighborhood with that typical fascination for the opposite sex that we all felt.

In later years Mr. Sexton remarried, and his new wife (Ruby, I think) had two daughters. I did not know any of them well, but I remember my parents speaking only well of them all and were glad that George Sr. had found new companionship. My parents sold their home and in 1990 relocated from the neighborhood where they lived for four decades, to St. Petersburg, Florida—a lifelong dream of my Dad's.

I also remember Mr. Sexton being sympathetic with my Dad's

feelings of disappointment with me when I left an engineering job to enter the ministry in late 1976. My Dad, at least, appreciated George's empathy.

Lastly, the Sextons had a swimming pool in their backyard, which had been constructed by the previous owners of 4005 Ridge Road, the Bradneys. All through high school I was invited to swim there as were other neighborhood friends. It was always a very relaxed place and those of us with problematic relationships with our fathers enjoyed the refuge we found there and its difference to our own homes. Somehow Mr. Sexton knew something about sons.

Today, while I would love to become reacquainted with both George Jr. and Jack, they remain remote and I have no contact with them. The sons maintain selectively solitary relationships between them—George with Bill and Dan; Jack with Jim, and Dan with Jim. But I still care about this family and its heritage and the impact they all made on me for good.

As I get older my sense of mission to NOT forget people and certain families is becoming more passionate. I think that people's stories are important and instructive. They can also be inspirational and they can model how to live in hard times.

In time, most people are forgotten. That is how it is. But with effort, a few can be remembered. It is my desire that this family should be remembered for its story. My affection for them all remains.

Five sons and a sad but resolute father touched me when I was young. I hope they are honored at this all-too-brief outline of their story.

APPENDIX 2

List of Places, Families, People and Events

4003 Ridge Road Annandale
4008 Ridge Road Annandale
5001 Regina Drive Annandale
4716 Wakefield Chapel Road
A&P Supermarket
Accotink Creek
Annandale 1862 map
Annandale Bowling Alley
Annandale Elementary School
Annandale Fire Chief Gaines
Annandale High School
Annandale Methodist Church
Annandale Recreation Center
Annandale Theater
Arlington Asphalt
Arlington House and National Cemetery
B-24 Liberator
Bailey's Crossroads
Balas
Barbara Aspinall
Barbara Finch
Barcroft Mill
Bernice London
Beth Farringer
Bill Russo
Bill Sexton
Bradney
Bray

Brent Eardley
Brentano's Book Store
Broyhill Crest
Burling Tract
Butcher family
C-5A Galaxy
Campbell
Capitol Beltway
Capone Music
Captain Audley H. McCain USN
Captain Edward Beach USN
Captain Si Whited
Carey
Carlyle House
Cathy Oliver
CDR Moore
Chase
Clark's Music
Clyde Beatty & Cole Brothers Circus
Coach Bob Hardage
Coach Ed Henry
Coach Mark Duffner
Col. Baker family
Col. Boleyn
Colonel Bert Kemp USAF
Colonel Daley, USAF
Colonel John S. Mosby
Colonel Stockus
Colonel Murrell
Columbia Pike
Columbia Pines
Cope
COPICA
Covington & Burling
Crosby Stills Nash & Young
Cuban Missile Crisis
Dan Sexton
Dawson's Small Arms of the World

Deaver's Appliances
Dick Kruger
DJ Frank Richards
Donahue
Dottie Daley
Dr. Jack Sexton
Dr. John W. Barcroft
Drug Fair

Dulles International Airport
Ed & Marge Eardley family
Edward B. Burling
Esche
F-4 Phantom
Fairfax County Park Authority
Farmer's Hill
Fort Belvoir
Fort Buffalo
Fort Ward
Fortney
Foulstone
Fountainbleau
Frank Beto
Frank Russo
Gallows Road
General Joseph Johnston
General O.O. Howard
General P.G.T. Beauregard
General Stonewall Jackson
George Mason
George Mason University
George Sexton jr.
George Sexton sr.
George Washington
Giant Food
Giant Music
Glenn Tomkinson
"grass", "weed"

Gould family
Harding family
Harrison
Helfand
High Ridge
High's Dairy Store
Hobson
Holme's Run
Hope Lutheran Church
Impett
Iva Trice Dress Shop
Jackie Collins
Jeff Dickey
Jeff Kemp
Jeff Von Beulwitz
Jim Sexton
Joan Bennett
Jocelyn Damgaard
Jocelyn Moore
John & Eve Morrow
Judge Daryl Hollis
Julius Garfinkel & Co.
Katz
Kerlin's Korner
Ketchum
Kruger family
Landmark Mall
Larchmont developer
Libby Stringer
Lincolnia Road
Linda Eardley
Linda Rasmussen
Little River Turnpike
Major General Reginal Clizbe, USA
Manassas Gap Railroad and Park
Manor
Marilyn Moore
Marine One

Mark Duffner
Mark Hamill
Mark McCain
Mary Custis Lee
Mary Dale School
McDonnell Douglas Aircraft
Mike & Macon Harper
minie ball
Moore family
Morrow family
Mount Vernon Masonry
Mr. Henretti
Mrs. Cook
Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church
Mt. Vernon
Munson Hill
Nancy Jo Russo
Northern Virginia Community College
Oak Hill
Old Georgetown Pike
Oliver family
Orpheus Records
Ossian Hall
Pastor Harold J. Uhl
Pastor John Schramm
Patricia Opp
Patrick Castellucci
Paul & Kelly Harding
Paul Douglas
Paul O. Schwartz
Peggy Jarman
People's Drug
Poco
Poe Intermediate School
Powell
President John F. Kennedy
R. M. Vredenburg & Co.
Rasmussen

Ravensworth
Reg & Rod Oliver
Renée English Damgaard
Reston
Ricciardelli
Richert
Rick LeCompte
Ridge Road
Rob and Ron Frere
Rolf's Heights
Rosalyn Moore
Rose
Rose Hill
Rose Lane
Roth's Americana Theater
Russo family
S&W Cafeteria
Saah
Safeway Food Store
Scott & Dan Stolldorf
Scoutmaster Richard Eastman
secession
Seven Corners Shopping Center
Sexton family
Shirkey Drug
Shively
Skells
slavery
Sleepy Hollow Bath & Racquet Club
Sleepy Hollow Road
Sleepy Hollow Woods
Sloan
Slot car racing
Solar Eclipse March 1970
Sports & Hobbies
St. Alban's Episcopal Church
St. Michael's Catholic Church
Star Supply

Star Supply
Steve Houseworth
Steve Murrell
Steve Teichler
Steve Willis
Steward L. Udall
Subterranean Sound Experiment (SSX)
Suzanne Duffner and Keith Miller
surfer cross
Ted Tedesco
Teddy & Suzy Sexton
The Ark
the Blue Angels
The Marquis de Lafayette
The Mommas and the Poppas
Three Chefs
Tom Basil Finnegan
Tony Stockus
Tops Drive in
Tyson's Corner
U. S. Army AA post W-63
Walt Robbins Inc.
Washington Gravelled Road
WEAM
WHFS
WMOD
Wombold family
Woodward & Lothrup

4003 Ridge Road Annandale Virginia 22003

(originally 933 Ridge Road)

Two bedroom, 1 ½ bath, 1,010 ft^2 home on 1/4 acre lot

[1] 200,000 solar panels are recently approved for construction at Dulles, making it one of the largest solar energy hubs in the whole nation (August 2023). Times change.

[2] Right out of college, I worked for Naval Sea Systems Command. It was an amazing job to have, through a consulting firm called R.M. Vredenburg & Co. in McLean. Renée worked when we were first married at Tysons Corner Shopping Center but then began legal secretarial studies at Northern Virginia Community College at the Alexandria campus which

she later completed at Virginia Western Community College (Associates Degree in Legal Secretarial Science), when we moved to Roanoke. When there she worked for Robert Frank, attorney. Later again she would finish her bachelor's degree *summa cum laud* at Southeastern Massachusetts University in Dartmouth, Mass. in 1991.

[3] https://ravensworthstory.org/events/jefferson-visit/

[4] https://www.annandalechamber.com/armyantiaircraftbase1951annandale.rhtml

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honor%C3%A9_de_Balzac

[6] https://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=fcpl/vif00010.xml

[7] https://spoommidatlantic.org/uploads/editor/files/Mid-Atlantic_Mills/Fairfax_County%2526_DC_Mills-Book-5-8-2009.pdf

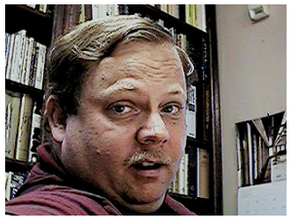
[8] Bailey's Crossroads is named for the Baileys, a circus owning family whose menagerie and shows were merged with those of P.T. Barnum about 1870. The Barnum and Bailey Circus was then billed as, "The Greatest Show on Earth." For many years Bailey's Crossroads was its winter quarters.

[9] https://www.lakebarcroft.org/about

[10] https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/john-jacqueline-kennedy-virginia-house-plans-auction-article 2015

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Neil Damgaard



Neil Damgaard grew up in Annandale, Virginia and graduated from Annandale High School in 1970. Then graduating from Virginia Tech and Dallas Theological Seminary (twice), he went on to become an ordained minister in New England for 36 years after shorter service as an engineer for Naval Sea Systems Command, and as a youth pastor in Roanoke, Virginia. He lives in retirement now, with wife Renée and mini-poodle, Halsey in Roanoke. Neil and Renée are also blessed with two grown daughters--Jocelyn, an engineer and patent attorney for Boeing (and mother of our grandchildren Ray and Jane), and Susanna, a Registered Nurse and "triple crown" hiker.

BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR

A Ghost In August (2023)

A time-fantasy where the author is time-transported back to Annandale, Virginia (his home town) into 1862.

Hit-G (2023)

A Christ-centered science fantasy, taking place in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Ogden, Utah and Sāo Paulo, Brazil

Wounded Faith (Understanding And Healing From Spiritual Abuse), 2022

Edited by the author, and published by ICSA (International Cultic Studies Association) with ten contributors

Defiance At Cairo (2020)

Based upon the author's father's letters to his mother from Europe and during the Second World War, this book tells their story--from a son's perspective

A History Of Dartmouth Bible Church (1963 To 2013)

A comprehensive history of a New England church, given by its former 36-year pastor

Proof